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A SHORT RECORD OF
ARMENIAN CHURCHES
IN INDIA & THE FAR EAST

IRAZAIAN

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A Short Record of Armenian Churches in the Far East



Indra Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

A SHORT RECORD OF ARMENIAN CHURCHES IN INDIA AND THE FAR EAST

Compiled and Arranged

By

Rev. ARAMAIŠ MIRZAIAN

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Indira Gandhi National
Centre for the Arts

DEDICATED

To the Beloved Memory of
Mackertich and Martha Adams
and
Ethel and Elizabeth Apcar

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Preface

The compilation and arrangement of this brochure has afforded me several satisfactions ; and readers who come by this pamphlet will find in the reading of it, I hope, no wasted effort.

It is among the last of my services to the Church and Community in Calcutta, where and among whom I have been privileged to serve for over a decade as the least of God's servants. And I offer it as a token of thanks for the many blessings, happinesses, joys, friendships and goodfellowship enjoyed.

May God's blessings be ever with you, reader ; and may you ever find strength and comfort in the Church and continue staunch always in the Faith of your Fathers.

TER ARAMAI MIRZAIAN,

*Priest of the Holy Church of Nazareth
in Calcutta.*

15th April 1958.





His Holiness Vazgen I



HIS HOLINESS VAZGEN I

SUPREME PATRIARCH AND CATHOLICOS OF ALL ARMENIANS

Elected on 30th September 1955. Anointed on 2nd October 1955.

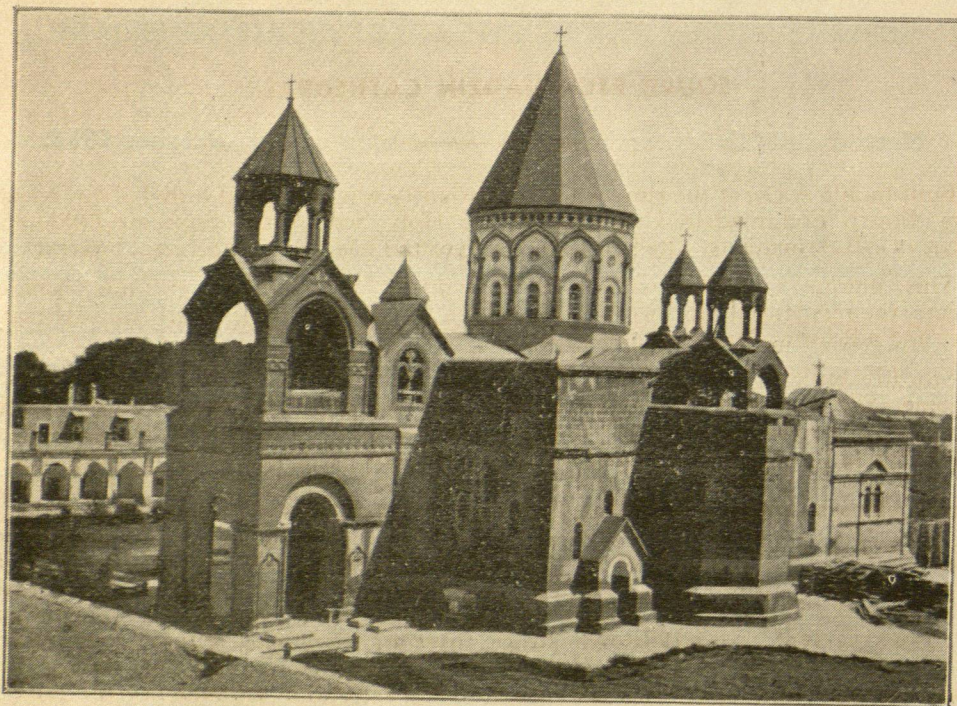
Bishop Vazgen Palchian, until recently the Senior Ecclesiast of Armenians in Roumania and Bulgaria, is perhaps the youngest dignitary of the Armenian Church to assume the great responsibilities of Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of all Armenians.

At a general meeting of clergymen and laymen, held in Sourb Etchmiadzin Cathedral on 30th September 1955, at which only the 137 mandated delegates of Armenians in the Homeland and in diaspora were present, by overwhelming majority vote, Bishop Vazgen was elected to this exalted assignment. In the presence of a very large and devout congregation, and with the participation of over one hundred clergymen under the able direction of His Grace Archbishop Mambre Searounian, His Holiness was ceremoniously anointed and confirmed in Office on Sunday 2nd October 1955.

For centuries the Supreme Head of the Armenian Church has been required to steer the destinies of the Church and Nation through turmoil and trouble, and history affirms that such heavy burdens have been undertaken successfully. Their multiple responsibilities have not deterred the holders of this high assignment, but have enhanced their experience, ability and wisdom. And these high dignitaries of sterling quality have attained great achievements towards religious, national and international advancement, tranquillity and peace, which have attracted general admiration and acclaim, and which have been a constant source of pride for the Nation.

At the age of 47, His Holiness Vazgen I has assumed such onerous duties enthusiastically and in full cognisance of the great responsibilities attached to His high office. Armenians in all parts of the world extend to His Holiness, their humble greetings and pray for His long life and success to His energetic endeavours for the glory of the Church and the Nation.





**The Holy See of the Supreme Patriarch
and
Catholicos of All Armenians**

SOURB ETCHMIADZIN CATHEDRAL

Built in 303 A.D., at the time when Christianity was embraced only by the Armenian Kingdom, Sourb Etchmiadzin Cathedral is the Holy See of the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. Its historical background has created universal interest.

This unique Cathedral stands in the midst of extensive grounds, where the Catholicate, the residential blocks of its dignitaries and innumerable pilgrims, a Theological Seminary and a Printing Press are also situated.

Sturdily built in stone, with four pillars in the centre of the Church supporting the main dome, the Cathedral constitutes an exquisite presentation of early Armenian architecture. Throughout the many centuries of its existence, this construction has received the kind care and attention of renovators on many occasions. During the past decade serious damages were discovered and His Holiness the late George VI, Catholicos of all Armenians, devoted much time and thought to prepare a scheme for thorough repairs. His labours were adequately rewarded through the kindness and generosity of the Armenian Government, who undertook necessary repairs and renovations by their skilful and zealous architects, engineers, painters and workers. No labour or material was spared and, by the united efforts of all concerned, the entire construction was efficiently strengthened and renovated during 1955. In addition to major thorough structural renovations, the artistic decorations and paintings, which have adorned this beautiful Church, have been correctly reproduced by the skill of painters and today this magnificent monument—the pride of all Armenians—is almost in its original state. Honour and gratitude is due to the kind Government of Armenia, for providing the required labour and material entirely at their cost, in order that this sacred Centre of National Religion and Faith shall not perish.





His Grace Bishop Assoghik Ghazarian

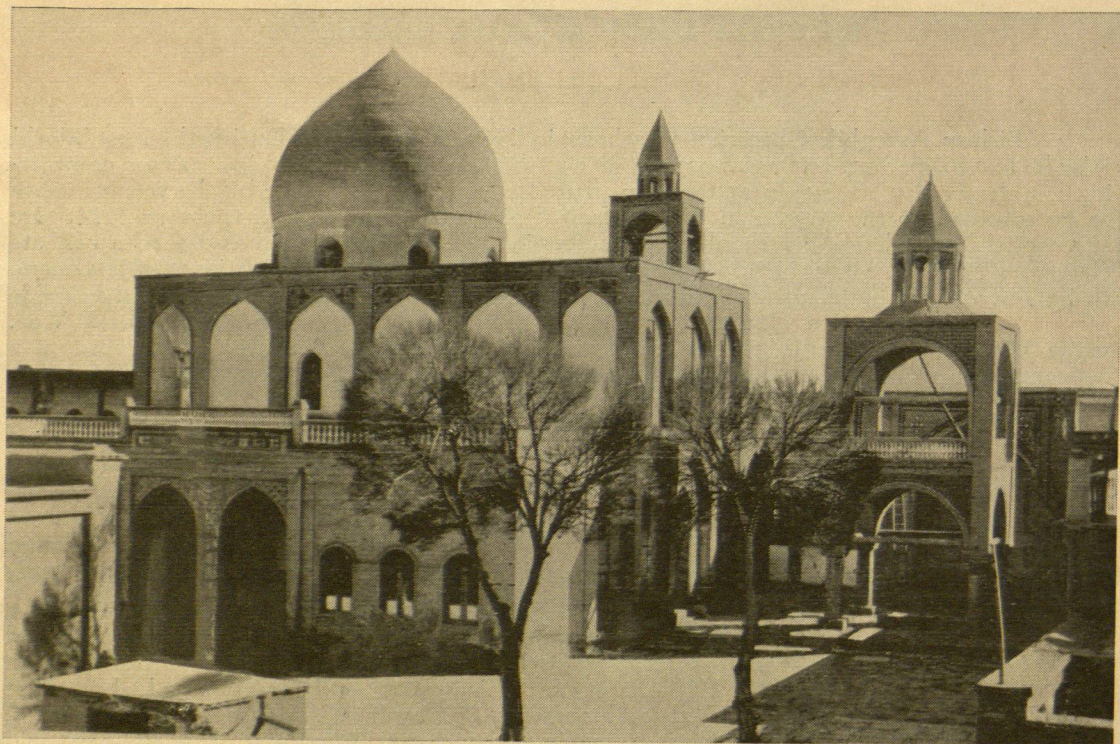
HIS GRACE BISHOP ASSOGHK GHAZARIAN

Bishop Assoghik Ghazarian was born in 1909 in Armenia. During the First World War he lost his parents and as an orphan he had to undergo great hardships. After completing his elementary education at the Armenian National School of Bagdad, he was fortunate to be admitted to the Armenian Theological Seminary of Jerusalem in the year 1924. He successfully completed his theological course in 1932 and was then ordained a celibate clergyman by the late Archbishop Thorgom Goushagian, the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. In 1937 he was appointed as Vicar General of the Far East where His Grace rendered valuable service to the Armenian Church and the Community. During the Second World War, while His Grace was in Manchuria, he was captured by the Japanese and placed in a concentration camp, where he had to go through great ordeals for a period of four years until his release after the War was over.

In 1950 he returned to Jerusalem to participate in the election of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem. The following year His Grace was invited by the Armenian Community of California to take up the work of their diocese. In 1954 the Armenian Community of Australia, in appreciation of His Grace's valuable services rendered to his flock, invited him to go there to organise the Community and to build a church. This fond and cherished dream of His Grace and the Armenian people of Australia has, however, only recently been realised.

In 1956 His Grace returned to Jerusalem where, by the decision of the Brotherhood of St. James' there, and the newly-elected Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Archbishop Tiran Nersioian, he was deputed to the Holy See at Etchmiadzin, to be consecrated a bishop. His Grace was consecrated on the 24th of November last by His Holiness, Vazgen the First, Catholicos of all Armenians. He is now in Calcutta as Delegate to His Holiness and first Prelate of the Armenians in the Far East.





All Saviour's Cathedral in Julfa-Isfahan, Iran

ALL SAVIOUR'S CATHEDRAL IN JULFA-ISFAHAN, IRAN

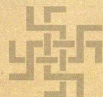
Shortly after their arrival in Isfahan in 1604, the Armenians constructed a modest Church, which was entirely rebuilt during 1655-1664, through the generosity of merchant princes of the time, and since then it has served as the Head Church of Armenians in Iran, India and the Far East.

Exquisite paintings, depicting Biblical History, cover the entire interior surface of the walls and ceiling of this well-known Cathedral. These and the nearby museum, attract the attention and admiration of innumerable visitors.

In the grounds of this Cathedral stand the Prelacy of the important Diocese of Armenians in Iran, India and the Far East, the residences of High Ecclesiasts (which was built at the cost of the late Mr. J. C. Galstaun of Calcutta), a well-equipped library, a printing press and a museum of old and valuable Manuscripts, Art, Sculpture, etc.

During the past three centuries, All Saviour's Cathedral has served as an important religious centre for Armenians in the Far East and under the skilful guidance of the twenty-eight successive Bishops, who have devoted their energies and endeavours to the welfare of this great institution, many noteworthy clergymen have been educated, trained and sent out to serve its widespread Diocesan Churches and their congregations. Today, through existing circumstances, unfortunately no high dignitary is in office, but the wise and experienced clerical members of the Ecclesiastical Council conduct the affairs of their diocese judiciously and adequately.

The 300th Anniversary of this Cathedral is to be celebrated shortly.





**His Holiness Vazgen I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All
Armenians, with the Archbishop of Canterbury**

**TEXT OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY'S ADDRESS
AT THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF St. SARKIS, IVERNA GARDENS, LONDON W. 8
ON SUNDAY 15th APRIL, 1956**

Your Holiness and beloved brethren in Christ.

I am deeply touched that I should receive at the hands of His Holiness the Supreme Catholicos of all Armenians this lovely cross—which as a gift between friends will surely bless him who gives and him who receives. For here in the Church of St. Sarkis I do indeed feel among friends. Five years ago I was privileged to attend the Divine Liturgy in this Church and to address the congregation on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the Battle of Vardanantz. That visit itself was a proof of the friendship between the two Churches in London, which your vicar has done so much to strengthen and develop: and may I be allowed to say how happy I am to greet him now as Bishop Toumayan. I earnestly pray that God will richly bless him in all his episcopal ministry among you.

But today marks a greater friendship which exists between the Armenian Church and the Anglican Communion throughout the world. And what a notable event it is, that here in London His Holiness the Supreme Catholicos and the Archbishop of Canterbury should share in the work and worship of the Divine Liturgy. No Catholicos for many centuries has left his own country to undertake such an Apostolic journey as this among his people. No Catholicos has ever set foot in England before. Here the fellowship in faith of our two churches receives a new and enriching sacramental significance when I am privileged to attend the Divine Liturgy in the presence of His Holiness.

I must think first of the antiquity of your Church going back to the shadowy days of its beginnings in time of the Apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew, and to the great labours of St. Gregory the Illuminator under whom, by the grace of God, the Armenian Church and Nation became indissolubly united in the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. Before that date and ever since your Church and Nation have faced countless hardships and persecutions, faced them with undaunted courage and have survived them, though with terrible losses, in the confidence of Christ. No Church has been more fiercely caught up into the cruel conflicts of history and the strifes of competing creeds. Suffering and persecution so often drive a people in upon themselves, making them narrow and loveless. But where the Holy Spirit prevails, it can do the opposite and turn suffering itself to fresh triumphs of the Christian Faith.





Rev. A. Mirzaian with His Imperial Majesty the Shahanshah of Iran

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY AND QUEEN OF IRAN IN INDIA

The Armenians in India were aware months ahead that His Imperial Majesty of Iran, Shah Mohamed Reza Pahlevi, and Queen Soraya, with their magnificent entourage, were to visit India and, as honoured and precious guests of the Government, were to stay a few weeks and see and enjoy the special places of historical value and nature's admirable scenes in this vast continent.

With great joy we reiterate that the Shahanshah and the Queen have, with this most important and historic visit, created and earned for themselves great love and affection, and have further renewed and strengthened the centuries' old cordial friendship between Iran and India.

His Imperial Majesty and the Queen, after visiting various provinces of India, arrived in Bombay on the 5th of March 1956.

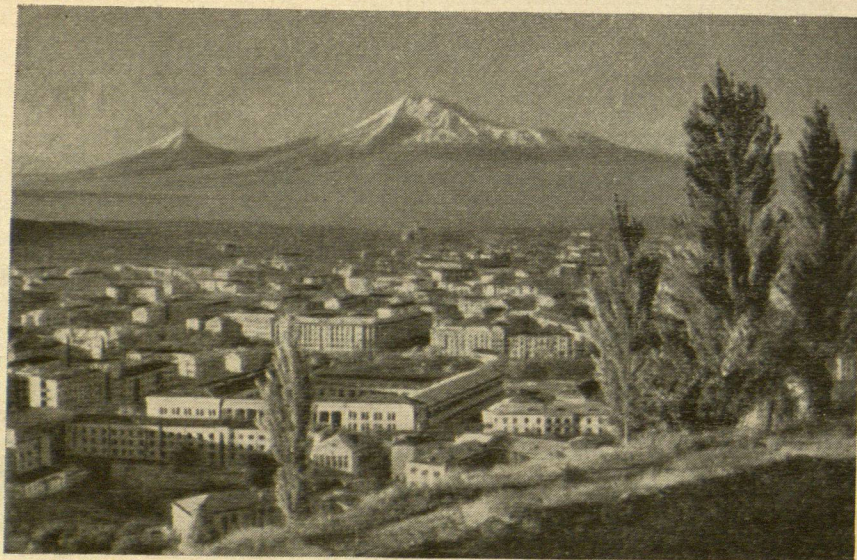
On that day the city had a festive appearance. Government institutions and the main roads of the city were adorned with arches and illuminations. Beforehand the two Armenian Church Committees of Calcutta and Bombay had together worked out a plan in this connection and had settled special representatives to meet His Imperial Majesty and Queen Soraya at Bombay.

For this very special reason Rev. Aramais Mirzaian of Calcutta had come to Bombay a day before to make preparations in connection with meeting His Imperial Majesty and the Queen. On Tuesday the 6th at Bombay, after special arrangements made by the Iranian Ambassador, Rev. Mirzaian, together with the members of the Bombay Armenian Church Wardens, Mrs. Rose Basil and Dr. Aram Eghiazarian, met His Imperial Majesty. Rev. Mirzaian, with a brief speech in the Iranian language, welcomed His Imperial Majesty and the Queen, on behalf of all the Armenians in India, which pleased His Majesty very much. Unfortunately the Queen was indisposed on this occasion and was not present.

During the presentation of gifts His Majesty expressed his special appreciation and publicly praised the sincere friendship and immense industry of the Armenian people.

At the conclusion of his visit, on behalf of himself and the Queen, His Imperial Majesty expressed his great appreciation and best of good wishes to Rev. Aramais Mirzaian, the representatives of the Calcutta and Bombay Church Committees in particular, and the Armenian public in India in general.





Erevan, The Capital of Armenia, with the famous and historical double-crested mount Ararat

ARMENIA AND HER PEOPLE

Armenia occupies the most northerly area in the Middle East, where the ancient civilizations have flourished. Tradition places in Armenia the site of the Garden of Eden. At least two of the rivers mentioned in the Book of Genesis (2: 14), the *Euphrates* and the *Tigris*, have their source and flow partly through Armenia. *Mount Ararat*, where the Ark of Noah rested after the Flood (Gen. 8:4) is in the heart of the Armenian Highlands. Armenia is a biblical land.

The Armenians belong to the Indo-European family of nations. The cuneiform inscriptions discovered in many parts of Armenia establish the fact that in this land, at the dawn of history, dwelt a group of people who are known under the names of *Uratu* (from whose name is derived the word *Ararat*), *Nayiri*, *Khourî*, *Khaldi*, etc. In the 9th and 8th centuries B. C., these people formed a powerful state and fought against the Assyrians. During, or before the 7th century B. C., as part of the Great Aryan migration, a new Aryan people, presumably coming from Thrace, Eastern Europe, poured into this land, conquered the natives, and assimilated them. These newcomers were called *Armens* by the Greeks and the Persians, and it is under this name (*Armenians*) that they came to be known in all European languages. However, the Armenians call themselves "Hy" (pronounced as "high") and their country "Hyastan."

Historical Sketch

The history of Armenia is a sad but inspiring record of rise and fall, of triumph and tragedy. It is a tenacious and unequal struggle against tyranny for the elementary human rights. We find the Armenians, after occupying and settling in the land of *Ararat*, first struggling against the Persians (521 B. C.), and then against Alexander the Great and his successors. In the beginning of the 2nd century B. C., during the reign of *Artashes I* (*Artaxes*, see his coins), Armenia became an independent and organized state. Under *Artashes I* the frontiers of Armenia reached the River *Kura* in the North, the *Caspian Sea* in the East, Northern *Mesopotamia* in the South, and *Cappadocia* in the West.

In the second half of the first century B. C., Armenia became a major power in the East. The reign of *Tigran* (*Tigranes*) the Great (95-55 B. C.), is the most glorious epoch in Armenian political history. His rule extended from the Caucasian mountains to Palestine, from Persia to the heart of Asia Minor. He gave to himself the title of "King of Kings," and his conquered kings were used as his servants.

In the middle of the first century B. C. the Romans, with the help of the rebellious son of *Tigran*, reduced Armenia to its proper boundaries. Thereafter, Armenia became a buffer state between the Romans who pressed her constantly from the West and of the Persians who tried incessantly to occupy the country from the East. This fatal position of ancient Armenia between the great rival states of the East and the West, which continued throughout her history, was one of the chief causes which hindered her prosperity and had an



unfavourable influence on political and inner development. Owing to its physical and geographical characteristics, Armenia has always been a gigantic natural fortress and was strategically most important as a base both for assault and defence. It was precisely because of its strategic value that wars were constantly waged for the possession of Armenia, and that its history is so closely connected with that of the great empires of the Middle East.

In 301 A.D. Armenia accepted Christianity as its state religion, through the efforts of St. Gregory, the Illuminator, and by the royal edict of King Tiridates. In 384, the country was divided between the Byzantine and Persian Empires. The latter kept its kings on the throne until 428, when at the demand of the Armenian nobility (feudal lords), the Persians deposed the king of Armenia and sent governors to hold the country.

Under Foreign Rule

The Persians in 451 tried to convert Armenia back to pagan Mazdaism, but the Armenians resisted successfully. St. Vartan the general, and St. Ghevond the priest, were the leaders of this famous resistance. The Arabs began to invade the country in the year 639. The Armenians revolted many times for political independence against both the Arabs and the Persians but without success because of lack of unity. At last in 885, a wise native prince Ashot Pakradoony succeeded by peaceful means in assuming the title of king under the nominal supremacy of the Arab Califs. This line of semi-independent Kings of Armenia lasted for two centuries (885-1070). The Byzantine Empire absorbed this little kingdom, as well as many smaller principalities in Armenia. The Armenians however, formed a strong element in the Byzantine Empire; for they gave units of armies and many generals, as well as twelve emperors to the tottering throne of Constantinople.

Cilicia: Lesser Armenia

Greater Armenia, the original home of the Armenian people, was never again a political unit, as the Byzantines, the Seljuk Turks, and the Tartars successively seized parts of the country and fought over it. As a result of these incessant invasions and fightings, and great insecurity in the land, the Armenians began to migrate to other countries. A great number immigrated into Cilicia on the Mediterranean Sea. In this new land, the people founded a new Armenia and established an independent principality in 1080. It became a Kingdom under Leon II (1198) respected by the Crusaders, Byzantines and Mohammedans alike. In this period of history, the Armenians came in direct contact with Europeans through the Crusaders, whom they helped greatly and fraternized. The last king of Armenia, Leo VI, is buried in Paris, where he had come to ask the help of the Christian powers to regain his kingdom.

After the fall of the Cilician Kingdom (in 1375), the Armenians passed under the yoke of the Ottoman Turks and Persians. As a result of the Russo-Turkish war of 1829, Armenia was finally partitioned among these three powers. During the long years of their struggle for



existence, the Armenians never abandoned their hope for independence, and made desperate attempts to regain it. These attempts culminated, after indescribable sufferings and massacres at the hands of the Turks, in the creation of a little independent Armenian Republic in the Caucasus in 1918. President Wilson, in 1920, at the request of the Allies, delineated the boundaries of a greater Armenia, which, however, never materialized. Since 1920 a section of Eastern Armenia with an area of only 11,000 square miles, has been incorporated in the Soviet Union as one of its sixteen republics. The greater part of the country is still under Turkish occupation.

Armenian Culture

The archæological discoveries, not only in Armenia but also in the neighbouring countries of Assyria, Babylonia and the Hittite Empire, have shown that Armenian culture is of an original nature. Authorities have shown that in architecture, in metallurgy, in artistic designs and motifs, the ancient Armenian culture has greatly influenced the arts and crafts of all its neighbouring countries. The influence of Armenian Church architecture has, according to some European scholars, (Strzygowski, an Austrian) spread even to the West. Its folk music and dances are highly appreciated. Armenian miniatures occupy a very prominent place in the history of the fine arts. As far as her ancient literature is concerned, Armenia has a vast number of cuneiform inscriptions, most of which are still waiting to be deciphered. From the 5th century A. D., soon after the discovery of the Armenian alphabets, Armenians developed a classical literature of unique value, which remains the main source not only of its ancient history and philosophic thought, but also that of its neighboring countries.

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

A Brief Historical Outline

Origins

According to tradition, Christianity was introduced into Armenia by the Apostles St. Thaddeus and St. Bartholomew in the middle of the First Century. The Apostles were martyred in Armenia, and their graves were venerated in the ancient churches of Artaze and Aghbak. Other preachers of the gospel who also came to Armenia left deep traces of Christian living, which were too strong to be obliterated. It must be noted that in the two neighbouring countries, west (Cappadocia) and south (Syria) of Armenia, Christianity flourished very early. Through contacts with these countries, Armenia was strengthened in the new religion.

There are many historical records indicating the existence in Armenia of a large body of Christians during the three centuries preceding the official and mass conversion of the



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH : A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE — *Contd.*

nation to the Christian faith at the beginning of the Fourth Century. Religious persecutions, perpetrated by three kings of Armenia during the years 110, 230 and 280, would not have occurred if there had not been widespread acceptance of the Christian faith in Armenia. Eusebius of Cæsarea, the famous ecclesiastical historian, mentions a letter written by the Patriarch of Alexandria to Mehroujan, Bishop of Armenia in the year 254. This letter shows that Christianity had not only spread in Armenia, but also had taken organized form with Bishops who were well known outside of Armenia. These and many other historical evidences attest the apostolic origin of the Armenian Church.

Armenia was the first country in the world to have adopted Christianity as the state religion. The date of conversion is generally accepted to be the year 301. (However, recent chronological researches by some scholars place the event in the year 287.) It is significant that this took place twelve years before the Edict of Milan, by which Constantine the Great, Roman Emperor, proclaimed Christianity to be a religion on the same footing with Paganism. It was about twelve years later, in 324, that the same Emperor depicted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire. The great change in Armenia took place through the efforts and extraordinary courage and wisdom of St. Gregory, an Armenian nobleman, known afterwards as the "Illuminator of Armenia." He was educated from early childhood in Cæsarea of Cappadocia among Christian circles. St. Gregory entered into the service of King Tiridates of Armenia and later suffered heavily for his Christian faith by the orders of the King, whom however, eventually, together with the entire royal court, he converted to his Faith. King Tiridates, in turn, helped him to convert the whole country. St. Gregory strengthened and reorganized the triumphant Christian Church in the country. With him began the new line of Patriarch-Catholicoses (supreme heads of the Church), which continues to this day. The present Catholicos, His Holiness Vazgen I, is 130th in succession. St. Gregory built the first mother-church in the capital of the country near Mount Ararat, following the instructions given him by our Lord in a vision.

Beginning with the year 301, the religious life of the country underwent a complete change; heathen gods disappeared and the profession of the Faith of Christianity became general. St. Gregory administered the Church of Armenia for about a quarter of a century. The fundamentals of the internal organization of the Church and rituals are ascribed to him. He was also instrumental in the conversion of the neighbouring Caucasian countries of Georgia and Caspian Albania (present Azerbaijan). The Ecumenical Council of Nicea met during the year 325. St. Gregory was invited to the Council but, owing to his old age, he sent his son Aristakes to attend the Council in his place. St. Gregory died in the year 325, and Aristakes became his successor. St. Gregory is venerated as a saint by almost all the Eastern Churches as well as by the Roman and Greek Churches.

The Translation of the Bible

In the Fourth Century the Armenian Church was well-organized, but it lacked an



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH : A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE — *Contd.*

element of the utmost importance. The Bible and the Church rituals had not yet been translated into Armenian, since there was no Armenian alphabet at that time. These were read in the Greek or Syriac languages.

It was a learned and holy monk named St. Mesrobe a former secretary at the royal court, who surmounted the difficulties connected with the discovery of an Armenian alphabet. After some years of research and experiment, St. Mesrobe invented an alphabet, 36 letters in number, for the language. With the assistance of the King, Vram Shabouh, and the Catholicos St. Sahag, he succeeded in making Armenian a written language. This took place in the year 404. More than twenty years had to pass, however, before the Holy Scriptures, including the so-called Apocrypha, were translated into Armenian. The translation of the liturgy and some of the famous writings of the Fathers of the Church were also completed. Simultaneously there appeared many original writings in Armenian with splendid style and extraordinary richness. The Armenian translation of the Bible for its perfection and beauty in style, is by some western scholars of the Bible called "The Queen of Translations." This period immediately following the invention of the alphabet is the *Golden Age of Armenian Classical Literature*.

Defence of Christianity

With the conversion of Armenia the natural inclination towards the Romans and Greeks was more strengthened, and this inevitably aroused the mistrust of neighbouring Persia, which made desperate efforts to compel the Armenians to renounce their new faith. No amount of persecution, intrigue or threat could, however, induce Armenia to embrace the Zoroastrian religion of the Persians. An armed conflict of major importance between pagan Persia and Christian Armenia took place in the year 451, when 66,000 Armenians, in defence of their religion, led by General Vartan Mamigonian and the Heads of the Church, encountered 220,000 Persians. This battle was one of the greatest events in the history of the Armenian Church. Its inspiring description was written by a contemporary religious writer in the form of an epic, in which the devotion of the Armenians to their faith is beautifully depicted. The Armenians lost the battle on the field, as was expected, but they held to their faith. Thirty years later the defenders of the faith once again took up arms under the command of the former general's nephew, Vahan. They were successful this time, even on the field of battle. The Persians were soon forced to realize the futility of their anti-Christian policy. Armenians retained their religious freedom. Thus, the Armenian Church escaped the lamentable fate of the once glorious Church of Persia. St. Vartan Mamigonian, who fell in the first battle in defence of Christianity, symbolizes the religious spirit of this nation, and is the greatest saintly hero of the Armenians.

The Arab invasion in the Seventh Century swept the country with terror, and the Church gave numerous martyrs for the cause of Christianity. The Mohammedans, also, who ruled Armenia for twelve centuries, were unsuccessful in their bloody attempts to



convert Armenian Christians to the religion of Islam.

When native governments had ceased to exist in the country, the people looked upon the heads of the Church as their legitimate leaders and protectors against ruthless barbarians who incessantly invaded the country. And the Catholicoses, through their appeals and visits to the Califs and Khans, saved many lives and spared hardships for the Armenian people and also made their own positions more secure. The outstanding religious figure of this Arab period is a monk, St. Gregory of Nareg (950-1005), a saintly mystic of poetical temperament. His "Book of Tragedies," a prayer book, is to the Armenians, what "The Imitation of Christ," or "The Pilgrim's Progress" is, or has been once, to the Western Christians.

The Patriarchal See changed its place several times as a result of insecurity prevailing in the country. In the Eleventh Century, when a substantial part of the population shifted south to Cilicia, the See followed its people and eventually settled in Sis, capital of Armenian Cilicia. In these times, the Church of Armenia came in direct contact with the Church of Rome through the Crusaders and Papal Legates. Rome tried very hard to bring the Church of Armenia under its jurisdiction. Her hard labours resulted only in creating disturbances and divisions in the country. The most famous ecclesiastical figure of this Cilician period is St. Nerses Shnorhaly, the Graceful, Catholicos (1165-1173), writer and enricher of the Church.

In the middle of the Fifteenth Century, the Holy See returned to its original site—Etchmiadzin in Northern Armenia. But historical factors caused the continuation of Catholicoses in Cilicia to shepherd their people in the far south in those dark ages. This line of minor Catholicoses still exists and now has its seat in the village of Antelias, near Beirut, in Lebanon.

In the Nineteenth Century, Protestant missionaries came to the Middle East. Their original plan was to work among the Moslems, but the missionaries were utterly and completely unsuccessful. Instead, they began to preach among the native Armenian, Greek and Assyrian Christians with better results. Many Armenians, allured by the better educational system of the missionaries and hoping to secure the protection of western Protestant powers in Turkey, separated from their mother-church and formed their own communities, which continue to this day.

Western Armenia and Cilicia, which only thirty years ago had a population of nearly 2,000,000 Armenians, are now almost devoid of these Christians because of the greatest of tragic events in the history of this nation. During the years of 1914-1918, half of the population were massacred in the most horrible manner by the Turkish state, and the other half were scattered throughout the world and thrown into the lap of uncertain destiny. Those clergymen who survived the great disaster are now serving their people wherever there is a community of Armenians. With amazing vitality the Armenian people have already recovered from their material destruction and re-established their prosperity as much as possible. The Church, after the terrible blow, is still alive and trying to adapt herself to the



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH : A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE — *Contd.*

new conditions. At the present time the Armenian Church has three seminaries for the training of its clergymen. These seminaries are in Jerusalem, Antelias (Lebanon) and Etchmiadzin (Armenia).

Attempts at Reunion

Up to the close of the Fifth Century the Church of Armenia was in communion with the rest of Christendom, as there were no divisions among the Christian Churches at that time. But in the course of time, happy relations between the Churches gradually altered. The reason was mainly those religious quarrels with which Christianity in the Byzantine Empire was infected. The Armenian Church first took no part in those controversies. She stood aloof from the whole quarrel, and accepted the decisions of the first three Ecumenical Councils which were held to decide and to proclaim the orthodox doctrine and to reject the heretical ones. These quarrels, however, took a very acute form in the first half of the Fifth Century. To settle these controversies, an important meeting of Christian Bishops took place in Chalcedon on the Eastern bank of the Bosphorus in 451. As we know, it was the year when Armenia was in a life-and-death struggle with mighty Persia in defence of Christianity. After the war the country was in a confused condition. It was obvious that under the circumstances, the Armenians had neither the heart nor the time to wrangle about theological questions. So, it is not surprising that they began to take interest in this Council of Chalcedon after more than fifty years from its convocation when the country was given its religious freedom and was in a quieter shape. When the Church of Armenia heard about it, Christianity was already divided about the validity of the Council's decisions. Even some of the Emperors had openly rejected it by official decrees.

Besides, to the Armenian as well as to the many other Eastern Churches, the decision of this Council seemed contradictory to those of the first three Ecumenical Councils. These and many other reasons persuaded the Armenians to reject it. Once the decision was given, it was never taken back. So, beginning with the Sixth Century, Armenia took her part with those who were anti-Chalcedonian, and she has remained on the same ground ever since.

In spite of the above attitude, however, there have been continual attempts at reunion with both the Greek and Roman Churches, but without permanent result.

Differences

The main differences between the Armenian Church and the Roman Church are the following : With due respect to the Great Church of Rome, the Armenian Church repudiates her doctrine that she is the mother-church of Christendom and that the Pope is the Prince of the other Patriarchs. Again, although the Armenian Church regards the Pope as one of the chief bishops of Christendom, and Patriarch of the West, it does not accept the theory of his infallibility, nor considers him as the vice-gerent of Christ on earth.

On the other hand, her differences with the Greek Church are very slight. Indeed,



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH : A BRIEF HISTORICAL OUTLINE — *Contd.*

one may say they are almost in complete accord on all matters, except with regard to the decision of the Council of Chalcedon concerning the nature of Christ.

The Church of Armenia believes that the only possible way of Christian reunion is to hold fast the fundamental principles and beliefs of the Church; to be one in fundamental principles and to leave the rest to the liberty of the individual or to communal judgment. Any Church accepting the first three Ecumenical Councils with accompanying indispensable doctrines, such as the belief in sacraments (including the Holy Orders of deacons, priests and bishop), in the divine authority of the Church, in the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, etc., is the one, Catholic (universal), and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH

Doctrine

The doctrine of the Armenian Church is condensed in the "Nicene Creed." As mentioned previously, the one great difference between the Church of Armenia, and the Roman and Greek Churches has been the refusal of the Armenian Church to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. The Council of Chalcedon stated that when our Lord walked, or felt thirsty, or ate, He was acting as man; when He was healing, calling Lazarus out of the grave, or teaching His disciples, He was acting as God. In this way of explanation the Egyptian, Syrian, and the Armenian Churches saw a danger of dividing the person of our Lord into two selves, and these Churches abided by the decision of the third Ecumenical Council. They state that our Lord was truly God and truly man, laying equal stress on both statements; all through His life He was God and man at one and the same time—He was *one person* and had *one nature*.

The Ecclesiastical and Hierarchical Organization

The supreme authority in the Armenian Church belongs to the Supreme Catholicos-Patriarch who resides in Etchmiadzin. (The Catholicos of Cilicia has the same prerogatives in his Provinces of Syria, Lebanon and Cyprus.) He is elected by delegates sent from all parts of the world where there is any considerable number of Armenians. The delegates are of the clergy and are also laymen. Then come in order of rank the two patriarchates of Jerusalem and Constantinople. These patriarchates had, during the Turkish rule, a temporal function besides their religious office.

Then come of course the three main orders of bishops, priests and deacons. In between these basic orders the Armenian Church has titles and ranks which are conferred



according to the merits of each candidate. The most important of these ranks is the *vertabed* conferred on the celibate and learned clergyman.

The clergy in the Church of Armenia are divided into two classes—the married and the celibate. The former do parish work and cannot become bishops as long as their wives are alive. To the celibate priest all the positions of the hierarchy are open. In the Church the celibate clergy wear a monastic head-veil, conical and pointed at the top.

Liturgy and Services

In its main features the order of the Liturgy of the Armenian Church is the same as that in the Latin, Greek, Syrian and Egyptian Churches.

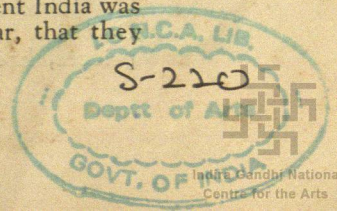
But just as every Church has put its own stamp and style, so to say, on the secondary ceremonial details of its liturgy, so too, has the Armenian Church. The liturgy lasts from one to two hours, according to the way of the singing or to the occasion. For a solemn Liturgy as many as six servers are required at the Altar, otherwise, two servers might be regarded as sufficient. The choir is always essential. The singing is vocal, and the tunes are Armenian; harmonious singing has only been introduced lately. The hymns and prayers are very beautiful and inspiring.

THE ARMENIAN COLONY IN INDIA

History

There are no records to show when and under what circumstances Armenians first found their way to India, but there are indications that they have been connected with India from remote antiquity, even before the Christian Era. Authentic evidences, however, prove that they were trading with India in the early part of the fifteenth century. They were well established in almost all the commercial centres of the country long before the advent of the Europeans. In fact, it was *trade and commerce* that attracted the Armenians to this tropical country from the snow-clad mountains of Armenia and from the cool plateaux of Persia. In fact Armenians in India are considered as a branch of the Armenian colony in Persia.

They have been the pioneers of the foreign trade in India. They carried on an extensive trade with Venice and Amsterdam, the Ottoman Empire and Russia. It must be noted that the early-comers formed no permanent settlements in the country. They were simply transient merchants who came all the way from the land of Ararat and Persia to purchase the spices and fine muslins and silks and precious stones for which ancient India was so famous. It was only during the reign of the great Mogul Emperor, Akbar, that they settled down and formed various colonies.



THE ARMENIAN COLONY IN INDIA — *Contd.*

This enlightened ruler, Akbar, recognizing the talents of the Armenians in commerce, encouraged them to settle down, giving them every freedom, including that of religion. They flourished immensely during the reign of this wise ruler and his immediate successor. Since the sixteenth century we find Armenians settled in Agra, Delhi, Surat, Bombay, Calcutta, Dacca, Chinsurah, Saidabad, Madras, etc.

They changed their residence with the rise and fall of commercial centres, leaving behind their cemeteries and churches as landmarks; most of these churches being the first Christian edifices in these parts of the country.

The Portuguese, who were the first Europeans to trade with India, found in the Armenians formidable competitors. They tried to strangle the Armenian trade by violence and attacks upon their ships, but without success. What they failed to do by high-handedness "the cool-headed and ever-diplomatic English" achieved by strategem and peaceful tactics. The decadence of Armenian trade and influence in India begins with the coming of the English.

Their Services to the Christian Cause

Armenians being a mercantile community deeply engrossed in their commercial pursuits, had evidently no time for missionary activities. They have never sent to, or organized missions in India. Armenians in general have never tried to propagate their way of belief among others. They have even hesitated to accept into their Church those who have spontaneously asked to become members of the Armenian Church. Nevertheless they have rendered important services to the Christian cause in various ways; for instance through their generous religious benefactions, protection and support of Christian institutions and above all by their example. For, as an American divine, Frederick Davis Greene, who lived in Armenia for several years, has remarked: "By nature the Armenians are deeply religious, as their whole literature and history show. It has been a religion of the heart not of the head. Its evidence is not to be found in metaphysical discussions and hair-splitting theology, as in the case of the Greeks, but in a brave and simple record written with the tears of saints and illuminated with the blood of martyrs." A few examples will, we hope, help to illustrate this statement.

J. W. Kaye, in his book *Christianity in India* (1859), tells an interesting story connected with the origin of Christianity in India. It seems that the Christian Church was in a declining state in India in the seventh and eighth centuries. At this critical period a mysterious Armenian merchant appears on the scene and revives the wavering Christianity in India. This is what Kaye says: "Towards the close of the eighth century, when it appears that the Indian bishoprics were under the authority of the Nestorian patriarchs of Seleucia, an Armenian merchant, named Thomas Cana, took up his abode in Malabar. Before this time the Christian brotherhood both on that and the Coromandel coast, persecuted by the native princes, had been driven into the interior of the country to seek refuge in the hills. The



influence of Thomas Cana, who whether or not formally appointed to the Episcopal office, appears to have performed its functions and borne its title, was great throughout southern India. Under his protection, the native Christians enjoyed security and peace. It has been conjectured that this man, who married and died in India, and left behind him a numerous progeny, is the Christian worthy who has been confused with the Apostolic Saint, "i. e., St. Thomas the Apostle.

Another writer, Rev. Richard Collins in his *Missionary Enterprises in the East*, refers to the same story as follows: "In the eighth century, as acknowledged on all hands, Mar Thomas the merchant, called by Syrians of Travancore Knay Thoma, settled on the Malabar Coast. He was a pillar of the Indian Church and it has been supposed by some that the tradition of the advent of the Apostle Thomas is to be traced to the fact that the merchant had the same name." It was he who obtained from the "emperor of Malabar" several commercial, social, and religious privileges for the Christians of that country. The early Portuguese writers call him Thomas Cananeo and give his nationality as Armenian.

Another Armenian "Pillar of the Church," who rendered many services to the Christians and specially to Jesuit Fathers in India, was Mirza-Zul-Quarnain. Father H. Hosten, S. J., has written about him at length in the memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1916. The following is a summary. Mirza was brought up with his younger brother in the royal palace, as adopted sons of Emperor Akbar's Armenian queen, who was childless. In spite of all the luxuries and temptations of a Mohammedan palace, the children remained loyal to the faith of their ancestors. After Akbar's death his successor ordered them to embrace Mohammed's religion; and a first step forced them to be circumcised and recite the "Calima" (the credo of Mohammedans). They refused so persistently that the king ordered them to be cruelly scourged. Mirza, who was fourteen, yielded for a while under the burning pain of the blows, but the younger brother, a mere boy of eleven, would not flinch. Later, however, the elder boy, too, openly proclaimed his return to the Christian faith by cutting a cross into the flesh of his right arm. The king seeing the steadfastness of the children allowed them finally to remain in their religion, which, as the children themselves said, "they had sucked in with the milk of their mother." The younger boy shortly died. The elder boy lived to redeem in manifold services his one act of weakness as a child. He became one of the king's nobles, entrusted with important commissions. "The king gave him many times occasion to discuss in his presence and before the whole court about the things of our Holy Law against the highest and wisest Moors in the king's entourage. He would do it so ably that the king himself would applaud and approve what he said and he showed such zeal that Fr. Jose de Castro, who was always present, wrote to me several times and related to me orally that he could not have done it better himself." At all the most solemn feasts of the year Mirza sends to the (Jesuit) Fathers a large sum of money to be distributed in alms among the poor Christians. His kindness towards those who came from paganism is beyond words. He helps and assists them in all their needs, that they may be confirmed in the Holy Faith. He



does the same for orphan girls, who otherwise would be in danger. In a word, Prince Mirza is among these Mogores another apostle, a second St. Paul, who becomes "Omnibus omnia, ut omnes christo lucrifaciat." Kind to all, the pillar of Christianity, the only refuge of all the afflicted, he not only procures to all the bodily assistance they want, but ministers with even greater success to their souls. "Many became Christians because the religion of the prince, whom they saw daily assisting people in dying well, and burying the poor, could not be false." In a letter from Goa, written in 1619, it is stated: "The faith was propagated most in a certain province of Mogor, where Mirza Zul-Quarnain, a native of Armenia and a Christian from his birth, ruled since 1619 with the title of governor. Greatly in favour with the king, and therefore very powerful, he promoted largely our religion. He built a church in his province, where the faithful would assemble and acquit themselves of the observances of their religion. The number of poor having greatly increased, he took some two hundred of them into his palace and supported them with great generosity. This example of his faith and charity drew a great many away from the persuasion of Mohammed, and the unhappy thralldom of paganism; hence, he obtained the name of "Father of Christians of Mogor." Extending still further the bounds of his great charity, and in order to keep up the care of our Redeemer's Sepulchre in Jerusalem, he sent thither from the remote banks of the Ganges nice presents and a goodly sum of money for the maintenance of the Holy places entrusted to the custody of the religious. He wished to have a sodality established under the patronage of the Mother of God, and he was the first to have himself enrolled and to profess his allegiance to the great Queen. Besides his many other benefactions, Mirza Zul-Quarnain gave a handsome sum of money by which the Jesuits bought landed property near Bombay.

During a persecution, to save the lives of Jesuit Fathers, he spent almost all his wealth and subsequently "from the position of a rich man he was reduced to poverty." In spite of it all, Mirza Zul-Quarnain to the day of his death enjoyed a unique position for which he was envied by many. During his governorship "the followers of Mohammed dared not, under so powerful a protector of the Christian Law, set their face against it, on the contrary, they respected it."

Fr. J. Tiefentaller writes the following about another Armenian Christian. "There lived at the time at Narwar a Christian of Armenian descent who stood in high favour with the great Mogul and was subsequently appointed governor of that province. He built a new chapel for the gathered Christians. He further states that "The Armenian governor, the only supporter of the Church, having died the small Christian community there dwindled away, soon to disappear altogether."

The Armenian queen of Akbar was instrumental, as stated by Henry George Keane in his *Sketch of the History of Hindustan*, "In promoting the Catholicity of the emperor's mind and predisposing him to regard with favour the Christians."



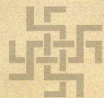
The present situation

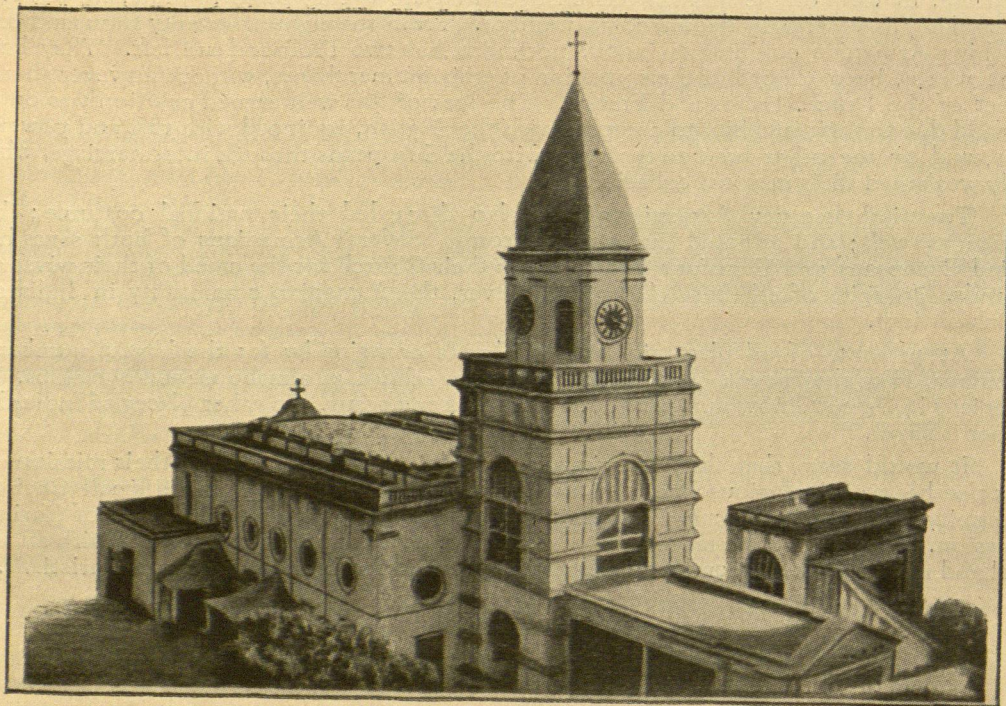
From this very brief sketch of the history and activities of Armenians in India it can be concluded that the Armenians in India can justly be proud of a glorious past, but their present and future, in view of the momentous changes that are taking place in India; are not at all bright. They have greatly decreased in number. From the eighteen-twenty thousand once flourishing Armenian community, today not more than two thousand are left. They have, on the whole, been robbed of their position of eminent merchants, without however sharing the fact of the Dutch, Danes and French. The loss of this well-earned position was on the one hand due to their inability to compete with the English, equipped with vast and powerful means, and on the other hand to their ties with the Europeans through intermarriage, which greatly weakened their national cohesion.

Twentieth century Armenians have also discarded their national costume; their language as well; and adopted European customs. Several Armenians of both sexes have married Europeans and Eurasians and forsaken their Church for the creed of their wives and husbands. In spite of all these changes, however, the Armenian community in India still remains distinct.

At present, of all places in India, Calcutta contains by far the largest number of Armenians. Here they have a church, a college, a day school, an almshouse and two clubs. The Armenians in Calcutta now number about one thousand souls. In other places of India their number is small.

It would seem that the Armenians in India have all but completed their mission, and it has not been an inglorious one. In fact it is not a small mission for a small Christian community, without governmental support, to maintain its own national form of Christian profession. They have done more: they defended it, protected and supported it with all their moral and materials means, and made Christianity respected in the eyes of non-Christians.





The Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Calcutta

THE ARMENIAN HOLY CHURCH OF NAZARETH IN CALCUTTA

In the early part of the eighteenth century, when Bandel, Chinsurah, and Chander-nagore began to lose their importance as the centres of trade and commerce in Bengal, Armenian settlers were attracted to Calcutta. Since they were mainly concerned with the develop-ment of trade, it was only natural for them to establish their business and residential houses in the vicinity of the river Hooghly, in an area which has served as the centre of commerce for very many years. Thus we find that in those days, Armenians built and owned houses in that part of Calcutta which is now bounded by Strand Road, Harrison Road, Chitpore Road and Canning Street. Centrally situated in this locality, and in the midst of their burial grounds, they erected a wooden edifice in the year 1707, and named it St. John's Church. ✓

In 1724, through the untiring efforts and help of Agha Nazar and with funds provided by the members of the community at the time, this wooden structure was replaced by a simple construction in brick and mortar, designed by an Armenian architect from Iran named Levon Ghevond. Because an older Armenian Church in Chinsurah, built in 1695 A.D. was consecrated in the name of St. John the Baptist, to avoid confusion, the Church in Calcutta was renamed Nazareth's Church. Thus the memory of Agha Nazar, its benevolent benefactor, was perpetuated. This Church is today standing in its original state of preservation.

The belfry and steeple of the present Church were added in 1734 by Manuel Hazar-malian, the cost being defrayed from funds left for that purpose by his father, Chater Hazarmalian.

In 1790, Catchick Arakiel embellished the interior of the Church, presented the tower clock and erected a double-storied parochial house and the surrounding boundary walls of the Church.

In 1906, a third storey was added to the parochial house at the entire cost of the late Mr. Arathoon Gregory Apcar.

The Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth has the distinction of being the oldest Christian sanctuary in Calcutta. It has been, and continues to be, not only a place of worship, but an institution of the Community, closely associated with the religious, charitable, educational and historical activities of Armenians in the East. Many merchant princes and magnanimous ladies of the Armenian Community have enriched this Church with munificent bequests and appreciative gifts and have thus ensured the continuous upkeep of this historic Church and its properties, as well as the maintenance and education of needy members of its congregation. Noteworthy among these generous benefactors are Sir Catchick Paul Chater, Thaddeus Mesrope Thaddeus, and members of the famous and highly respected Apcar family.





**The Chairman of the Armenian Church Committee, Mr. G. A. Arratoon,
with Her Excellency the Governor of West Bengal,
during the Thanksgiving Service**

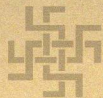
CELEBRATION OF THE 250th ANNIVERSARY

The two-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the erection of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Calcutta was celebrated on the 24th November 1957.

After Holy Mass in the morning a Requiem Service was held, in remembrance of the many benefactors of the Church. Following Evensong, a special Thanksgiving Service was held from 4-30 to 5 p.m. in the presence of dignitaries of other Churches in Calcutta, high officials, many guests and a large congregation. Her Excellency, Miss Padmaja Naidu, the Governor of West Bengal, graced the occasion by attending this impressive Service.

For this unique occasion numerous letters and telegrams of congratulations were received from all parts of the world and these messages formed a great source of encouragement to the Clergymen, the Church Committee and the entire Community in Calcutta. It is earnestly hoped that the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, which is the oldest shrine of Christian worship in Calcutta, will continue to serve the Community for very many years to come and will maintain and retain the affection and unity of its faithful flock.

A tribute to this Church, paid by an ex-pupil of the Armenian College in Calcutta, now residing in Soerabaia, Indonesia, is reproduced as a token of appreciation of his worthy effort.



The following lines are most devoutly dedicated to The Armenian Holy Church
of Nazareth, Calcutta, on the occasion of the two-hundred-and-
fiftieth anniversary of its construction

1707-1957

Time takes its course by day or night
And on his way what comes in sight
Preserves secure, intact and good
In annals left for future food
For those coming fast behind him,
To learn whatever be the theme ;
Then passes fast, no more is seen,
As he has so for ever been,
Wishing adieu to oblivion
Like vanishing sound of clarion
Leaving behind today's sorrow
Casting his thoughts for the morrow.

Two centuries and a half thus flew
O, how quickly they all withdrew,
But annals tell, preserved by time,
How the past has been great and sublime.

AGHA NAZAR the chapel built
With Christian zeal and warrior's shield,
For well he knew its value dear
Where'er it be, though far or near,
And when increased the devotees
A bigger plan before him sees,
And builds this oldest Church so fine,
Which firm has stood this day to shine,
With Tjatoor's gift left by his Will,
A Christian of distinguished skill ;

Where we devotees come to pray
And our sorrows therein to lay.

For Armenians of ancient life
The fruits of their laborious strife
Devoted they to Charity,
Dutious call of Christianity ;
And found their Church the strongest link
To unite them like a steel string.
Thus fused by FAITH, SINCERITY,
Rose abodes of Christianity
To cascade the rains of their life
And be a shelter in the world's strife.
For Armenians, where'er they are
Cling to their Church, in peace or war.

Not many years passed in its train
AGHA NAZAR appeared again
And built the Belfry Tower high
Which soon became a beacon by.
Then Catchick Arakiel of fame
In memory of his great name
With a large clock the Tower crowned,
The largest and oldest renowned,
Which tells the hour to the city.
A work of Love, Christianity ;
May their mem'ry ever be green,
May their good deeds ever be seen,



May Heaven's Grace on their souls be
E'er to shine in His Majesty.
And using thus their Royal gift
Our hands for them Heavenward lift
And deck their graves with sweet flowers.
Theirs was the grant, mem'ry be ours ;
And ne'er forget these Christians three
Through centuries, though few we be.

The Belfry bells ring soft and sweet
Inviting all therein to meet
To hear the Holy Sublime Mass
And prayers sweet that all surpass,
And the organ those hymns chanting
With the small choir sweetly singing,
That rise like angels' voices high
And touch the Heaven above the sky.
A hallowness surrounds thee there
And makes thee forget everywhere :
The mind is there concentrated
And thy prayers consecrated,
And when thou leave the Holy place
Thou feel clothed with Holy Grace,
Clothed and armed like a warrior
To meet and fight foes superior ;
Fear and sorrow there disappear
Joy, Happiness, instead appear.

'Tis here that all should congregate
To kneel and pray for their own fate,
For God dwells where combined men pray
And hears what His devotees say.
The Church is made to meet therein
To pray and ask pardon for sin
For like pilgrims we plot our way
Apt to dangers that none can stay.
But if thou enter His abode
And ask His help for the rough road
He surely will guide safely thee
However grave the danger be.
The Church thus glides from age to age
And helps all in their pilgrimage.

Then forget not Nazareth's Holy Church
Frequent it oft and feel its touch.
We thy brothers from these far Isles
Join thy celebration awhile
And hail the great and unique day.
With constant blessings we all pray
And wish this shrine still longer life
Through the world's continual strife,
To guard her children everywhere
And keep them all under her care,
To grow and form a Christian stand
And be the pride of their Fatherland.

Soerabaia, 24th November 1957

Gabriel J. Aparcar





**Church Committee and Clergymen of the Armenian Holy
Church of Nazareth, Calcutta — 1957**

Front row (from left to right) : Rev. E. Keshishian, Mr. G. A. Arratoon, Rev. A. Mirzaian, Rev. P. Petrossian
Middle row : Mr. Z. Hananian, Mr. P. Alexy, Mr. H. M. Nadjarian
Back row : Mr. M. S. Marcar, Mr. J. A. Arathoon, Mr. N. A. Basil, Mr. J. Michael

**Article appearing in "The Statesman" dated 25.11.1957, on the occasion
of the 250th Anniversary of the Armenian Holy Church
of Nazareth, Calcutta**

A special thanksgiving service was held at the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, Calcutta, on Sunday to celebrate its 250th anniversary. The Governor was present. The building was illuminated with multi-coloured bulbs. A miniature gold cross with the inscription "Armenian Church, 1707-1957" was presented to the Governor by Rev. A. Mirzaian.

When the Governor arrived at the Church a students' orchestra played the National Anthem. She then took her seat. The Choir composed of students, meanwhile, sang impressively "Rejoice, Holy Church."

Church bells pealed as a procession of priests in gorgeous robes, holding crosses and Bibles in their hands, and deacons carrying candles or censers, walked up the aisle. After prayers, the procession moved to the Altar, above which is an impressive painting of "The Last Supper."

**Article appearing in the "Amrita Bazar Patrika" dated 25.11.1957 on the
occasion of the 250th Anniversary of the Armenian Holy
Church of Nazareth, Calcutta**

A special thanksgiving service in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Calcutta was held on Sunday.

The solemn and imposing ceremony conducted by three priests in the presence of a congregation led by Sm. Padmaja Naidu, Governor of West Bengal, in the most ancient Church of the City, built in 1707, evoked respect in every heart. The vestments on the occasion, worn by the priests, the silken Sagavard (crown) with the Cross on it, the gold-embroidered Ezgest (vestment), the Boorvar (incensing), the clerical procession entering the Church and later ascending the Altar—all those ritualistic ceremonies associated with the Christian Church, were gone through in solemnity.

The Governor on arrival at the Church gate was received by the Committee members of the Church. The National Anthem was sung by boys and girls of the Armenian College and Davidian Girls' School. The Governor then entered the Church.

The service was conducted by the Rev. Aramais Mirzaian, Rev. P. Petrossian and Rev. E. Keshishian, the last specially coming from Madras to participate in this special thanksgiving service.





**Begum Sarkiesian, said to be the first Armenian Lady
who came to Calcutta in 1620**

THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN TOMB IN CALCUTTA

By Mesroby J. Seth

In the Calcutta Armenian Churchyard, which was the old Armenian cemetery, on the site of which the present Armenian Church of Nazareth, the oldest in Calcutta, was erected by Agha Nazar in 1724, there is a tombstone of black granite covering the remains of an Armenian lady who died in Calcutta in 1630, or 60 years before the arrival of the English under the leadership of Job Charnock.

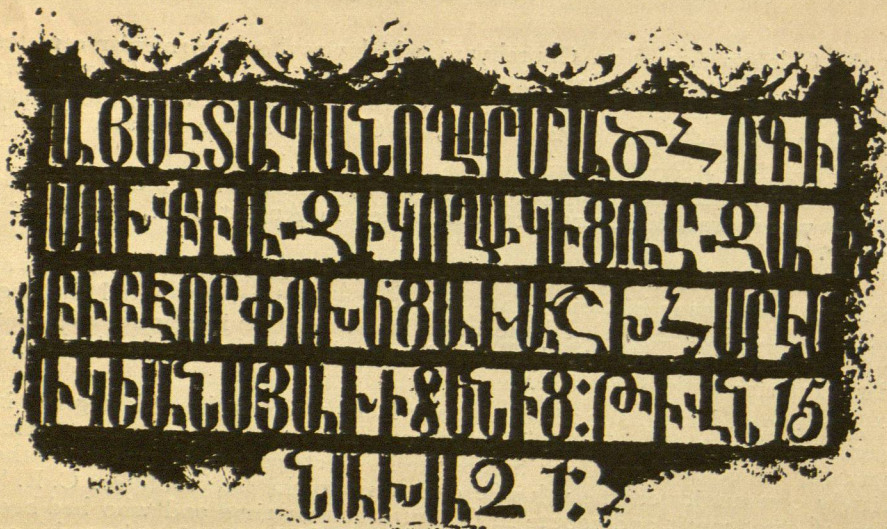
This antique and interesting grave, over which Time has rolled on its ceaseless course for over 300 years, was discovered by the writer in August 1894, under the following circumstances.

The Bengal Government were then compiling a "List of Ancient Tombs and Monuments in Bengal possessing historical and archaeological interest" and I was requested to decipher and render into English all the important Armenian inscriptions which were to be found in the Armenian churches in Calcutta, Chinsurah, Saidabad (Murshidabad) and Dacca, bearing dates anterior to the year 1800.

Whilst engaged in this fascinating work I came across the oldest grave in Calcutta, with a granite tombstone bearing an inscription of five lines only in ancient Armenian, and in a remarkably fair state of preservation despite its great age and the ravages of the elements. I immediately communicated the valuable discovery to the late Professor C. R. Wilson, an antiquarian of great merit and repute in Calcutta at that time and who had been commissioned by the Bengal Government to compile the List of "Ancient Tombs and Monuments in Bengal" already referred to.

The learned antiquarian was sceptical at first and refused to believe that such an old grave could possibly exist in Calcutta since it bore a date which was 60 years before the foundation of Calcutta by Job Charnock in 1690, but when he came and saw the tombstone, *in situ*, he became fully convinced that it was undoubtedly the oldest Christian grave in Calcutta. And as he was deeply interested in the early history of Calcutta and had succeeded in locating the boundaries of the Old Fort and the site of the Calcutta "Black Hole" he hailed the discovery with enthusiasm, as is evident from an article which he published in the pages of the *Englishman* of the 31st January, 1895, under the caption "Armenian Founders of





Facsimile of the oldest Christian tombstone in Calcutta
bearing the date 1630

THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN TOMB IN CALCUTTA — *Contd.*

Calcutta," from which the following is an extract :—

"It is gratifying to learn that the efforts which have recently been made by various enquirers and in various ways to push back the history of Calcutta to the remoter past, before the formation of the English Settlement under Job Charnock, have not been altogether without fruit. By slow degrees evidences are being accumulated which tend to connect Calcutta with earlier traders and prove that even before the building of Fort William the place was not without importance. Among such evidences one of the most striking is the discovery which has recently been made by Mr. M. J. Seth, an enthusiastic Armenian scholar, who at the instance of Government has translated a large number of the classical Armenian inscriptions in the Churchyard of St. Nazareth, Calcutta. The earliest inscription runs as follows :—

"This is the tomb of Rezabeebeh, the wife of the late charitable Sookias, who departed from this world to life eternal on the 21st day of Nakha in the year 15", i.e. on the 11th July 1630.

"What a world of questions is suggested by this newly found record! Why was this source of information never utilized before, who was the "Charitable Sookias," and how did his family come to be living in Calcutta sixty years before the advent of the English? Was there already an Armenian Settlement here? Are the Armenians, after all, the founders of the City?

"Upon these questions our early records do not cast much light, but they supply other equally important information about the Armenians in Calcutta. If they do not enable us to decide whether there was an Armenian Colony settled here before 1690 they show that it was through the Armenians that the English Colony secured a footing in the country. If Job Charnock be the founder of Calcutta, the author of its privileges and early security is the great Armenian merchant, Khojah Israel Sarhad. In a recent article we mentioned this remarkable man as one of the Embassy sent to Delhi in 1715; such a bare notice does but scanty justice to the services which he rendered on that occasion, and not on that occasion only, but at a still earlier period, when the English were even more in need of help.

"It was at the time of the rebellion of Subha Singh when the English were just beginning to build their Fort, that "Cojah Surhaud," as he was called, first appears in the records. In June 1697 he was sent as Political Agent to the camp of Zabardasth Khan, the Mogul General engaged in suppressing the revolt. Here, however, he met with no



THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN TOMB IN CALCUTTA — *Contd.*

success till at the end of the year when Azim-ush-Shan arrived in Bengal and assumed command. At the court of this easy-going Prince, Sarhad succeeded in ingratiating himself by his prudent conduct and winning address and in particular in becoming a prime favourite with Azim-ush-Shan's young son, Furrukh Saiyar, then about fourteen years old. The friendship of the future Emperor was won by presents of toys, at that time very acceptable, for which he expressed a great deal of satisfaction, often sending for Khojah Sarhad and making him sit by him many hours to show what uses they were for. The result of this judicious management was that in July 1698, for the sum of sixteen thousand rupees, the English acquired letters-patent from the prince, allowing them to purchase from the existing holders the right of renting the three villages of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindpur."

It will be seen from the above that the learned Professor believed in the existence of an Armenian colony in Calcutta long before the advent of the English, who formed a settlement in Calcutta under Job Charnock in 1690.

Prior to the discovery of the Armenian tombstone, the one covering the mortal remains of the reputed founder of Calcutta in the octagonal mausoleum in St. John's Churchyard was considered to be the oldest Christian grave in Calcutta. Job Charnock, according to the long inscription in Latin on his tombstone, died on the 10th day of January (*decimo die Januarii*) 1692.

A facsimile of the oldest inscription in Calcutta is given here for the information of antiquarian scholars, epigraphists and historical researchers. The date of the inscription is 15, according to the Armenian era of Azaria, better known as the "Minor" or "Little" era. It was started in 1615 by the monk Azaria at Julfa (the Armenian suburb of Isfahan) and it was in vogue amongst the Armenians of Persia and the Armenian colonists in India and the East up to the beginning of the 19th century when it was abandoned and the Christian era adopted. By adding the date of the inscription, which is the year 15 of the era of Azaria, to the year 1615 of the Christian era, we get the year 1630.

Before concluding this article, it may be mentioned that there are over a thousand graves in this old cemetery and churchyard. As we have seen, Rezabeebeh, the relict of the "Charitable Sookias" was the first Armenian to find a last resting place in that consecrated ground in 1630 and the last person to be interred there was the late Arratoon Stephen, the proprietor of the Grand Hotel and the owner of several landed properties in Calcutta, who died in May 1927.



THE OLDEST CHRISTIAN TOMB IN CALCUTTA — *Contd.*

There are some graves of historical interest in this, the oldest Christian cemetery in Calcutta. There lie buried Khojah Petrus Arratoon, the friend and confidant of Clive, as also Agah Catchick Arrakiel, the philanthropist, who liberated the prisoners, 138 in number, in the "Court of Requests" prison on the occasion of the jollifications which took place in Calcutta on receipt of the news of the recovery of King George III of England from his unfortunate malady in 1789. The ancestors of the leading Armenian families in Calcutta of the present day—the Apcars, the Agabegs, the Zorabs, the Bagrams, the Camells, the Emins, the Avdalls, the Sarkieses, the Thaddeuses, the Chaters, the Gaspers, the Gregorys, the Pauls, the Galstauns, the Balthazars, the Manuks, the Owens and the Arratoons—all lie buried there.





**The Calcutta Armenian Church Choir (1955) with
Father Babken Abadian**

THE PATHS OF GLORY

By Caro Basil

I am not an antiquarian. Old tombs and monuments do not interest me particularly. But there is something fascinating about an old churchyard—an aura of mystery and conjecture surrounding it. As you stand before the ornamental wrought-iron gates leading into an old cemetery and survey the rows of dissimilar crumbling mausolea—the rich beside the poor, the famous beside the unknown—you cannot but feel comforted in the knowledge that Death at least, though inevitable, makes no discrimination, for Death alone is truly democratic. Then, as you pause for a while amid this serene environment, your thoughts turn to the graves and you wonder what tales of love or adventure lie sealed within those narrow trenches; each tomb, each sepulchre must surely have a story of its own, one that would amply repay the trouble of inquiry.

The oldest church in Calcutta is that belonging to the Armenians. And it was their churchyard I visited to “look over” the old tombs in the hopes of unearthing something interesting. I was not disappointed.

The Armenian Church at Calcutta was built in 1707. Before this the present site of the church was a cemetery, close to which was a wooden chapel where the pioneer Armenians of the city would worship. This is why the compound surrounding the church is literally covered with drab, unpretentious graves.

“A curious feature about old Armenian graves, you will observe, is that the lettering on them is in relief,” a priest remarked, as he stabbed the air with his forefinger in the direction of several graves. “This is a custom we have adopted from the ancient Hittites.”

In a moment we had stopped before a white marble tomb. It was that of the well-known philanthropist, Mr. D. A. David, who had died two decades before.

“He left all his worldly possessions for the benefit of his church and community,” the priest said, “Such men are rare indeed.” He sighed and shook his head deprecatingly.

We moved on until we stood before the tomb of a man who had fought a lion. It must have been a memorable occasion for Calcutta citizens that day in 1796 when A. E. Abrahamian stepped into an arena to wrestle with a live lion, armed with nothing more than his bare hands. This young Samson was successful enough in his herculean task, but in the



THE PATHS OF GLORY — *Contd.*

encounter received so terrible a mauling that he survived the unfortunate lion but a few hours. The elders of the community apparently regarded his achievement most unfavourably and the following epitaph on his tomb is their grim warning to all future dare-devil exhibitionists!

“Come all you who are worldly-minded. See the pride of his native land, the strong man who wrestled with and killed a lion, but who succumbed to his injuries. Do not be proud of this man, for like the Tower of Babel, Pride will surely go before fall—1796.”

Since wrestling with lions seems to have little appeal for young men today, I rather felt that this counsel was wasted on posterity. Anyway, the elders of 1796 appear to have believed in the continuing spirit of adventure.

Nearby is the tomb of another well-known but less reckless sportsman, that of the late Mr. J. C. Galstaun, O.B.E., whose memory is revered in sporting—and specially racing—circles. Besides the two magnificent edifices in the city which bear (or bore) his name, Mr. Galstaun will be remembered for his book “Racing Reminiscences”, which he faithfully dedicated to “all those Bookmakers who for the past 60 years have taken my hard-earned money.”

“Now here is a tomb that will interest you,” the priest said, as we came upon a simple slab of gray marble which had a crack at one corner. “It is that of Joseph Emin.” The priest went on to relate briefly the life of this famous adventurer who went to England in 1751, became a porter on £8 a year, rising to £10 a year “if he behaved well,” and made the acquaintance of Edmund Burke and the Earl of Northumberland. He was later presented to the Duke of Cumberland (“The Butcher”) under whom he served as ensign in Germany. Emin left England, lived dangerously in the Middle East and returned to Calcutta in 1770. Soon after his arrival he joined the British Army under Hastings, saw action at Dinapore, wrote his Memoirs and died in 1809 at the age of 83.

The late Amy Apcar, a distinguished composer and authority on Armenian liturgical music, rests in the Apcar family plot which is dominated by the tomb of her illustrious kinsman Sir Alexander Apcar, associated for many years with the Apcar Shipping Line.



**ARMENIAN CHURCHES IN INDIA AND
THE FAR EAST**





The Armenian Church of St. John in Chinsurah

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN IN CHINSURAH

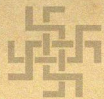
This Church was erected in the year 1695, principally through the untiring efforts of Johannes, an illustrious son of a famous family of merchants named Marcar. Johannes laid the foundation of this sacred edifice in the early part of that year, but unfortunately he died suddenly a few weeks before the entire construction was completed and his brother Joseph concluded the good work. The Church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist, in memory of Johannes Marcar, whose remains are interred inside the edifice he caused to be built.

St. John's Church in Chinsurah is the second oldest Christian place of worship in Bengal and is now the only remaining landmark of the once flourishing Armenian Colony of the town. But for over 260 years this Church has been held in reverent affection by Armenians in Bengal and elsewhere in India. Once a year—usually on the first Sunday after Epiphany—the festival of St. John the Baptist, the patron Saint of this Church, is commemorated by the celebration of Holy Mass and holding of divine service at this shrine, when large numbers of Armenians from Calcutta and its surrounding districts congregate.

There are over 100 graves in the churchyard and 28 inside the Church. Among the latter is the tomb of Petrus Catchick, who was responsible for certain extensions to the Church. Internees in the compound include Reverend Arakiel Pogose, who died in Narwar in the Gwalior State, and two members of the famous family of Melik Beglaroff, the descendants of the last independent Caucasian Prince of Karabagh. These graves are of: (a) David Freedone Melik Beglar, who died in Chinsurah at the age of 89, and (b) His son Joseph Melik Beglar, a writer of merit, a famous archaeologist and a well-known Civil Engineer, who supervised the construction of the Jubilee Bridge at Naihati. Joseph Melik Beglar was married in St. John's Church on 5th August 1868 and this ceremony is probably the last recorded marriage service held therein.

In the year 1932, the walls and roof of the nave and chancel of this Church were completely rebuilt, but the altar and its roof were retained in their original state.

It is known that prior to the construction of this Church, Armenians in Chinsurah attended the famous Roman Catholic Shrine of Our Lady of Happy Voyage, known as the oldest Church of Christian worship in Bengal. The graves of certain members of the Armenian Community of Chinsurah are found inside this Church.





The Armenian Church of Holy Virgin Mary in Madras

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF HOLY VIRGIN MARY IN MADRAS

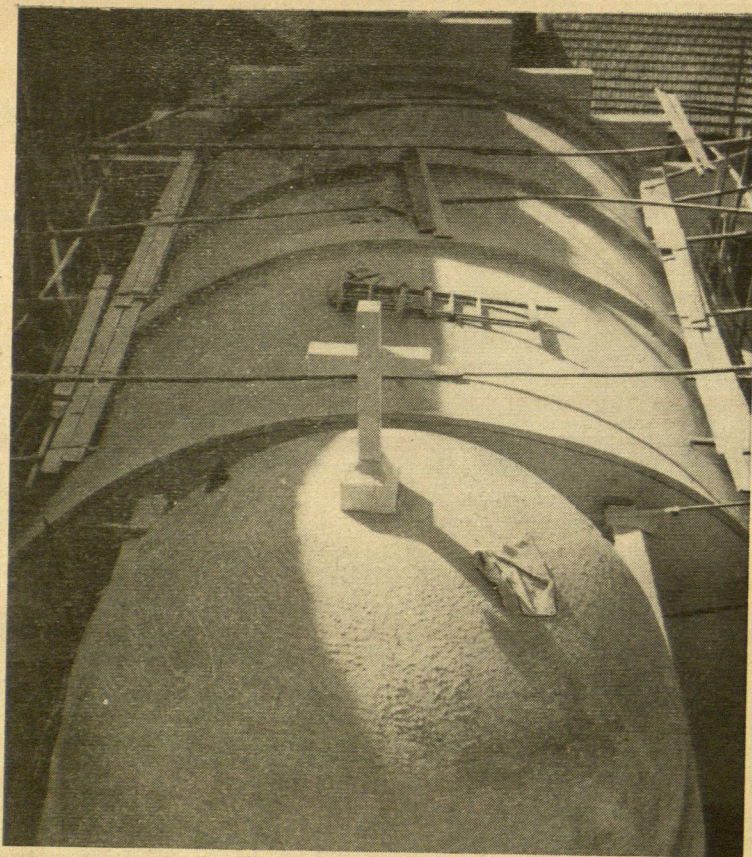
Although available records do not determine the exact period when Armenians first reached the Coromandel Coast, it has been possible to trace evidence of their trading in South India in the early part of the sixteenth century. The first settlers were soon followed by others and, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a flourishing colony of Armenians in Madras was well established in the Carnatic trade as well as in commerce with overseas.

The first Armenian Church in Madras was constructed in 1712, on the Esplanade, but this magnificent edifice was demolished. According to one source this demolition was effected because of the close proximity of the Church to the Fort area, but another account states that the Church was wrecked during military operations in 1746, when the French occupied Madras. Thereafter divine services were held regularly in the chapel of the community graveyard, which had been built in accordance with traditional custom.

The Armenian Church of Holy Virgin Mary in Madras, which is situated in a central locality, was constructed in 1772, through the generosity of several well-known Armenian merchants, many of whom have made handsome bequests to their favourite place of worship, and have thereby ensured the proper upkeep of this Church. These endowments, which included a number of landed properties at one time, have enabled the regular maintenance for the Madras Church of a Clergyman, Sexton and Church staff, and have appreciably assisted indigent members of its congregation. Other generous bequests have provided educational aid to the members of the Community in Madras. The latter continued till the commencement of the present century, when the number of the beneficiaries depleted considerably and it was found expedient to divert the relative income to Calcutta for similar benefits.

Several highly respected clergymen of the Indo-Iranian Diocese have succeedingly officiated in this Church and have played important roles in the religious, educational and social life of their congregation. Among these the outstanding services of the famous priest of our Church, Reverend Father Arathoon Shumavon, have merited distinctive mention and remembrance. His services to his Community in Madras extended over a period of forty years and terminated in the year 1824, when at the age of 74 years he passed away, while still in harness. This venerable ecclesiast devoted his entire energies for the benefit of Armenians in Madras and elsewhere and was solely responsible for the publication of the first Armenian Journal "Azdarar", which formed a medium of information about Armenians in India and in other parts of the world.





The Armenian Church of St. Peter in Bombay

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. PETER IN BOMBAY

According to available information, Armenians commenced trading in Western India during the second half of the sixteenth century. In those days Surat was the most important commercial centre, and in this once famous town several Armenian families established themselves, acquired dwelling and business premises and constructed a Church, which was, however, destroyed. In 1778 they erected a beautiful sanctuary and dedicated it to the Holy Virgin Mary but, because of long disuse, this edifice gradually crumbled and, during the present century, it was demolished. In the midst of the old Armenian cemetery, however, a Chapel may be seen standing even in present days.

Three of the famous merchants in this colony, Khojah Minas, who was styled "the President of the Armenians in Surat", Khojah Delaune and Khojah Kirakose, transferred themselves to Bombay in the year 1676. They were soon followed by others and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of Armenian families were residing in Bombay, engaged in the inland and overseas trade of this most important port of Western India.

St. Peter's Church in Meadows Street, Bombay, was built in 1796—1797, through the munificence of an Armenian merchant of Bombay named Jacob Petrus. At the foot of the altar of the Church, on a square tablet, there is an inscription in Armenian, which translates:

"This holy Church was erected in the name of the holy Apostle Peter, during the Patriarchate of His Holiness Lucas, the Catholicos of all the Armenians, by the munificence of Mr. Jacob of Hamadan, to the memory of his late parents, Mr. Petrus, his father, and Zanazan Khatoon, his mother, the foundation-stone of which was laid by Archbishop James, who was on a pastoral tour of India on behalf of the Holy See of Etchmiadzin in the year of Our Lord 1796, on the 14th day of Thirah (12th October)."

This sacred edifice served as a place of holy worship for Armenians in Bombay during the past 160 years. In recent years the buildings were found to have suffered extensive damage through dampness and the Community in Bombay and the Church Committee decided in favour of rebuilding it. This project received due approval by His Grace Archbishop Vahan Kostanian, who, representing His Holiness the late George VI, Catholicos of all Armenians, paid a visit to Bombay in 1948, and later obtained His Holiness' blessings of the worthy proposal. The Committee thereafter pursued the matter vigorously and, surmounting many difficulties, succeeded in giving effect to their well-conceived scheme and, during the latter half of 1956, a new Church, designed by a well-known Armenian architect of Beyrouth, Mr. M. H. Altounian, has been constructed on the plot of the old one. The blessing of the foundation of this new construction was performed by His Grace Archbishop Yegheshe Derderian of Jerusalem, during a visit to Bombay in June 1956 in the company of Revd. Father Shahe Ajamian. The new Church was consecrated on the 14th April 1957 by His Grace Bishop Terenik Poladian. The provision of a parsonage and other buildings near the Church is included in the scheme.





The Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection in Dacca



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF HOLY RESURRECTION IN DACCA

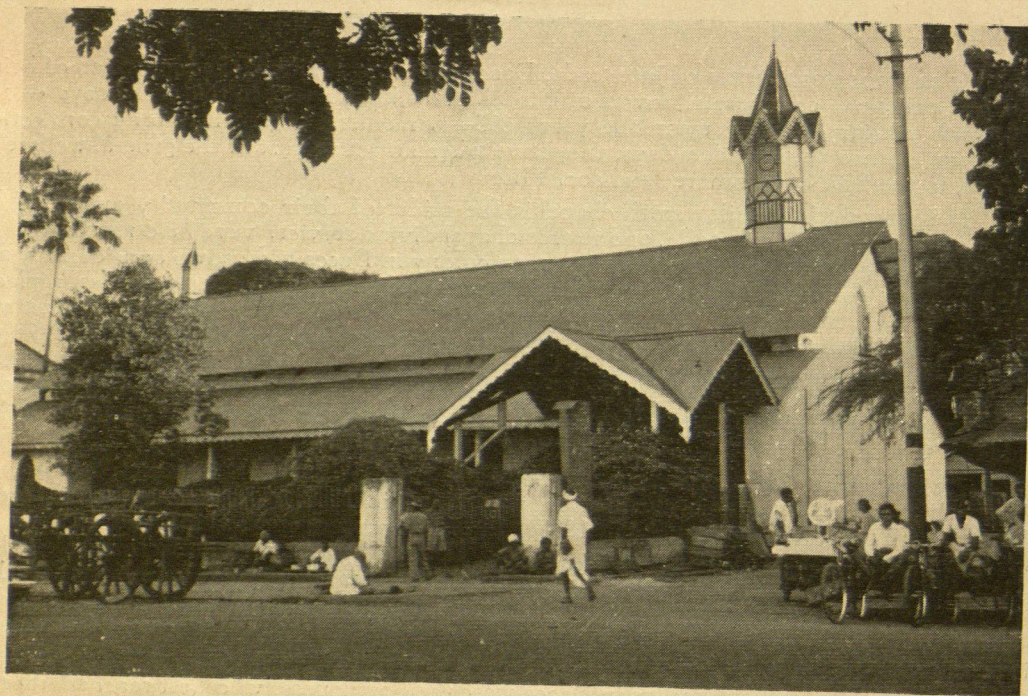
As an important centre of Jute trade, Dacca has always enjoyed the reputation of being one of the principal commercial towns of Bengal. It is known that in the early days of the seventeenth century—some say in the year 1613—Armenians began their long connection with Dacca. Since those olden days, they have taken an active part in the general welfare of the town, in the field of commerce and social life.

The early settlers built a small chapel in the midst of their community graveyard, in the locality known as Armanitolla, and in this chapel divine services were held regularly. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Armenian colony in Dacca had grown considerably and this chapel was found inadequate for the needs of the community. Therefore they replaced this with a Church, named the Holy Resurrection Church. This beautiful edifice was completed in 1781 and was consecrated by His Grace, Bishop Ephreim, who was later exalted to the highest position in the Armenian Church, namely The Catholicos of All Armenians. The extensive grounds on which this Church stands, were presented by a well-known merchant named Catchick Minas. His wife, Sophie, who died in Dacca in 1764, is entombed inside this Church.

At the entire expense of another merchant, named Johannes Carapiet Sarkies, the belfry, which also served as a clocktower, was added in 1837. Unfortunately this steeple collapsed during a severe earthquake in 1897. In 1907 a parsonage was built and in 1910 the floor of the Church was covered with marble and electric lights and fans were furnished by the late Mr. Arathoon Stephen, of the Grand Hotel, Calcutta, in memory of his grandfather, the Revd. Hyrapiet Gregore Bashkhoomian, who had officiated in this Church for a period of 15 years from 1828 and who passed away suddenly on the eve of his retirement from Dacca. His remains lie buried in the churchyard, near the belfry.

Amongst the earliest traders in Dacca were the Portuguese, who first reached there in the year 1612. In 1677 they constructed their Church of "Our Lady of Rosary", which is the oldest place of Christian worship in Eastern Bengal, now known as East Pakistan. In those early days Armenians attended services held in this Church, wherein are found eight Armenian graves.





The Armenian Church of St. John the Baptist in Rangoon

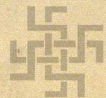
THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST IN RANGOON

Unfortunately the records of this Church were lost during World War II and at present it is only possible to rely upon information gathered from the oldest members of the Armenian Community in Rangoon and from their cemeteries in Mandalay, Syriam and Rangoon. From these it can be assumed that, when Armenians first came to India from Iran about 350 years ago, some of them went on to Burma and, settling there, played a prominent part in the promotion of trade, especially in the three important towns of Mandalay, Syriam and Rangoon.

In the eighteenth century they constructed the Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Mandalay, on a plot of land graciously presented to them by His Majesty the King of Burma. In this Church divine services were held regularly until the 1920's, when the community in Mandalay gradually moved down to Rangoon.

The Church of St. John the Baptist in Rangoon was erected by the community there in the year 1862 on land they had acquired in October 1858. This Church was formally consecrated on the 17th July 1863 by Revd. Father Aviet Chaytor, the then resident priest. The Church was internally remodelled with a new roof during 1908-1909.

During World War II, the Armenian Community in Burma and their Churches suffered considerable damages and loss of property and life. The Community Hall and the Parsonage attached to the Church in Rangoon were totally destroyed, while the members of the Community were compelled to leave their homes and occupations and seek fresh careers in other lands. After the War community life in Rangoon was partly re-established and it was found necessary to restore their Church. Through the spontaneous generosity of Armenians in Rangoon and in Calcutta, necessary repairs and renewals were effected during 1946-1947. Towards the end of 1948 the Church was consecrated by the late Revd. Father Vardon S. Vardanian, who went to Rangoon for this purpose from Calcutta, where he was officiating at the time. It has not been found possible to arrange for a priest and church staff to be available in this Church permanently, but the Armenian Community in Rangoon sincerely hope that their earnest desire for those officials will not be long in materialising. In the meanwhile Common Prayers and Services are held regularly by the Deacon in this Church and are attended by the members of the devout congregation in Rangoon.





The Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Singapore

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR IN SINGAPORE

Some of the Armenian merchants in India, mainly those on the South Coast, who were engaged in trade with Far Eastern Countries, were attracted to Malay during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and settled in Penang and Singapore. The early settlers were gradually joined by others and by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were a moderate number of Armenian families in these two important ports of the Federated Malay States, engaged in inland and overseas trading.

In the year 1834, the foundation was laid of the Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator and, by the beginning of 1836, this beautifully designed edifice of Armenian Architecture, was completed. The Church was consecrated on the 26th March 1836 by the Senior Archpriest of the Armenian Church in Calcutta, the Revd. Father Hovannes Catchickian, who had proceeded to Singapore specially for this solemn ceremony.

This Church is on Armenian Street in a central locality of Singapore. Many houses surrounding it belonged to Armenians in the nineteenth century. Through the kind generosity of Mrs. Shahnazar, a Parsonage was built in 1905 on this road, in the vicinity of the Church, and it stands as a glowing tribute to the memory of a benevolent and highly respected lady.

Adversities suffered by Singapore during the Second World War, left their unforgettable mark on the Armenian Community there. Most of them had the misfortune of incurring heavy losses of property, health and life. Some of the well-known figures were compelled to seek new careers in other lands and today only about 20 Armenians reside in Singapore.

Through the undaunted efforts and sacrifice of the members of the present Community in Singapore, the Church of St Gregory the Illuminator was repaired and renovated about two years ago, but paucity of worshippers and lack of adequate funds do not permit the maintenance of a priest now.



The Armenian Church of St. John in Djakarta

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. JOHN IN DJAKARTA

It appears that Armenians went to Java as traders first towards the end of the eighteenth century and succeeded in establishing several well-known commercial houses, engaged in trade with overseas markets.

A famous merchant in Batavia (now known as Djakarta), Jacob Arathoon by name, who was representing the firm of Shamirians of India, erected a wooden church in the year 1831, which was named the Church of St. Ripsima and later renamed the Church of Holy Resurrection. Unfortunately in 1844 this edifice was damaged by fire—the cause of which remained untraced—but the abovenamed Jacob Arathoon succeeded in repairing the damage and in restoring the church fairly quickly. This generous and devout gentleman passed away on the 19th June 1844.

His wife Mary replaced this wooden structure with a construction in mortar and stone, which was completed in the year 1854 and named St. John's Church. In her benevolent work she was ably and vigorously assisted by her sister, Miss Thagoohie Manook. The two sisters inherited the entire wealth of their bachelor brother, Gevorg Manook, and devoted a part of their legacy towards the construction of this new Church, which is situated in a central part of Djakarta, on the cross-roads of the famous Royal Park, now renamed Maidan Merdeka—the fields of freedom.

St. John's Church in Djakarta is one of the oldest Christian Sanctuaries in Indonesia.



The Armenian Church of St. George in Soerabaia



THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. GEORGE IN SOERABAIA

This beautiful edifice was constructed in the year 1927, at the entire cost of the following generous and benevolent ladies and gentlemen: Jacob Arathoon, George Manuk, Mrs. Mary Arathoon and Miss Thagoohie Manuk, who were also responsible for the erection of the Armenian Church of St. John in Djakarta.

For the past three decades, St. George's Church in Soerabaia has been the centre of religious, social, educational and national life of Armenians in this famous city of Indonesia.

Although comparatively small in number, Armenians in Indonesia have always loved their Church, their mother tongue and their nationals in all parts of the world, and have assisted their compatriots most liberally whenever the need has arisen. For many years their generosity was responsible for the maintenance of several students in the Armenian College, Calcutta. Unfortunately, as a result of adversities during World War II, the number of Armenians in Indonesia has depleted considerably and their present economic condition precludes the continuance of this highly appreciative aid.

During the war years, when Indonesia was under occupation, in common with other communities there, Armenians suffered extensive losses of life, property and general health. Ably led and encouraged by their religious shepherd, Revd. Khoren Kirakosian, their behaviour in most trying conditions was exemplary and richly deserved the proud tributes of their compatriots in other lands.





**The Armenian Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator in Harbin
(Manchuria)**

THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF ST. GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR IN HARBIN (MANCHURIA)

After the first World War, innumerable Armenian refugees, having gone through immense difficulties, at last settled down in the commercial town of Harbin, the capital of Manchuria. Hardly five years after the War, the Armenian population at Harbin, who could hardly procure their daily needs, undertook to build their own Church, which indeed was most commendable. It must be mentioned here that in the preparatory stages of the scheme, to construct the Church building, the efforts of Dr. Stepanos Mughdsian, the most beloved individual in the Colony who was at that time a famous physician in the Government service, was unsurpassed and most praiseworthy.

During the same period a well-known and rich Armenian merchant from Georgia had established himself at Harbin. He was the late Carapiet Aspietian. Aspiet in the Armenian language means "chevalier" and his work and deeds corresponded with the meaning of his surname. He came out into the open in a chivalrous manner and started building the beautiful Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator at Harbin. The Armenian congregation also willingly contributed their mite towards the construction of the Church.

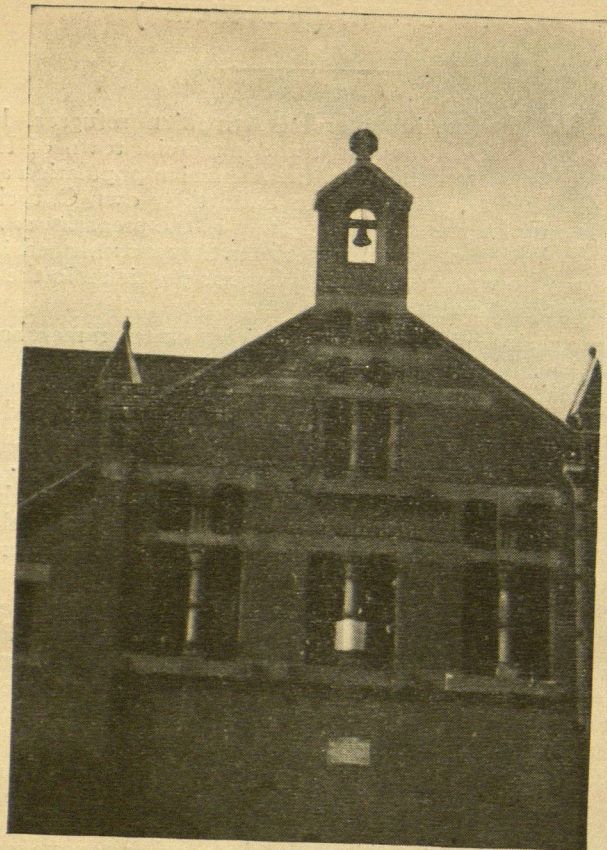
In the same year the Armenians also constructed a parsonage in the Church compound, a large and spacious hall for the community meetings and a suitable almshouse for the poor and occasional travellers. The Church is in the centre of the city, surrounded by a vast and very beautiful garden.

From the day this Church was built up to 1932, Rev. Eghishe Rostamiantz was the officiating priest. He worked most faithfully and conscientiously. From 1932 to 1937 the Armenian Colony was deprived of spiritual administration. Fortunately His Beatitude Thorgone Gooshakian, then Patriarch of Jerusalem of happy memory, felt the need and call of the people and sent Father Assoghik Ghazarian (at present Bishop and prelate of the Far East) to the Far East as Vicar General.

As soon as His Grace arrived in Harbin he reorganised the work of the Diocese and placed on a firm foundation the income of the Church properties, established benevolent associations and opened special night classes for the Armenian children and young people. With great love and patience he himself taught the mother tongue and Armenian Church history.

His Holiness the Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians, appreciated the faithful services of His Grace Bishop Assoghik Ghazarian and, as a mark of recognition, appointed him as the prelate of the Far Eastern Diocese and Delegate of His Holiness.





**The Armenian Holy Church of Resurrection
in Sydney**



THE ARMENIAN HOLY CHURCH OF RESURRECTION IN SYDNEY

It gives us great pleasure to announce to all Armenians that, through the persistent efforts of the past and present Councils of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Australia, in accordance with the ardent desire of our congregation and particularly through the mediation and help of His Grace Bishop Assoghik Ghazarian and His Grace Bishop Terenig Poladian, it was possible for Armenians to acquire a Church in Sydney, at 108 Campbell Street, near the Central Station.

The purchase of this Church, previously belonging to the Board of the Presbyterian Church in N.S.W., had always been under consideration, pending a final decision of the previous owners. This has been finally achieved through the persistent efforts and personal mediation of His Grace the Bishop.

The opening ceremony of the Church was held on November 3rd (Sunday morning) by performance of Divine Liturgy. The Dedication took place on November 9th, followed by bestowal of four minor orders to Messrs. Stephen Panigian, Sarkis Martin, William Ellis and Abraham Kailandjian. On Sunday morning November 10th the Church was solemnly consecrated in the presence of a great number of Armenians. The consecration of the Holy Altar was performed on November 17th. This was followed by Requiem.

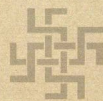
By the decision of the Armenian Church Council in Australia and by the wish of the Church's sponsor; Mr. Arthur Aginian, the Church was named the CHURCH OF HOLY RESURRECTION. It is the earnest desire of Armenians that through this Apostolic Armenian Church of Holy Resurrection in Sydney, the venerable souls of our blessed Saints may have their resurrection within us.



THE ARMENIAN HOLY CHURCH OF RESURRECTION IN SYDNEY — *Contd.*

His Grace Bishop Terenig, in his Sermon after the consecration of the Church, said ; "The Church of Holy Resurrection is only the beginning of the work and activities of the Armenian ecclesiastical life in Australia. Truly there is yet too much to accomplish. In our meeting we decided to buy a house near our Church to be used as a parsonage, Sunday School and as a community centre. It is quite obvious that our Bishop should have his own residence, our children be taught the faith of our Apostolic Church and also be acquainted with our language. The hall, besides serving as the centre of the social life of the community, should also be a centre of culture.

"The motto of the Church Council is to serve the Armenian Church and congregation in Australia. We will all work in unison devotedly and with faith. We have with us the newly-formed Ladies Guild which is governed by the same motto and principles, and for the achievement of the same goal. We intend to form a young men's organisation, which will also work for the same purpose and principles."



SOME PROMINENT PERSONALITIES





(The late) Archbishop Sahak Ayvadian



(The late) ARCHBISHOP SAHAK AYVADIAN

His Grace Archbishop Sahak Ayvadian was appointed Prelate of the Indo-Iranian Diocese in 1910. On assumption of office at All Saviour's Cathedral in Julfa-Isfahan, Iran, he interested himself in the affairs of the Cathedral, Diocesan Churches and National Institutions in Julfa.

With the assistance of the members of the Julfa Communal Council and of experienced clergymen, various schemes for the improvement of the finances of these institutions were formulated. By concerted action the famous square in Julfa, known as "Big Meydan", was relaid and modern shoprooms surrounding it constructed and rented to tenants, thereby enhancing the income of the Cathedral. Furthermore, with funds collected during the jubilee of St. Catherine's Girls' School, for the benefit of this School, extensive properties were acquired in the village of Boloran, inhabited by Armenians.

His Grace was fortunate in witnessing the construction, in the extensive grounds of All Saviour's Cathedral in Julfa, of

- 1) a palatial double-storied Bishop's House, and
- 2) a library-cum-museum,

the costs of which were borne entirely by the late Johannes Carapiet Galstaun and the late Thaddeus Arathoon respectively, both of Calcutta.

His Grace visited India and the Far East and, during his travels, interviewed the late Sir Catchick Paul Chater, from whom he sought financial assistance for the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth.

In 1924 His Grace went to Jerusalem, where he passed away two years later.





(The late) Sir Catchick Paul Chater, C.M.G., L.L.D.

(The late) SIR CATCHICK PAUL CHATER, C.M.G., L.L.D.

Born in Calcutta on the 8th September 1846 of Armenian parents, Catchick Paul Chater was educated at La Martiniere, Calcutta. At the age of 18 years he went to Hongkong in quest of a career and found a position with the Bank of Hindustan, China and Japan. Very soon he realised that he could not be content with what he was doing and conceived the idea of reaching out for greater opportunities, open to the bold and courageous. He resigned his post and entered into business as an exchange broker.

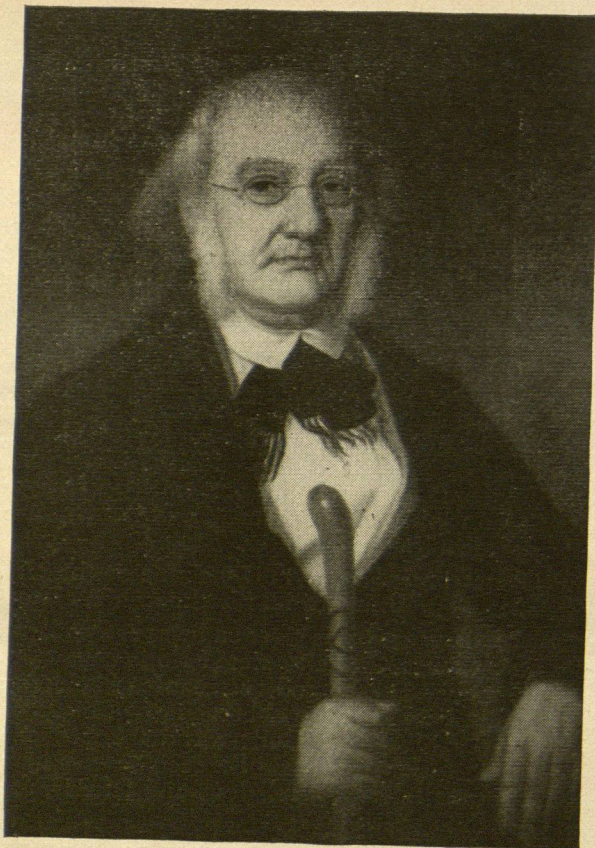
Having inherited exceptional commercial genius from his illustrious ancestors—the famous philanthropist merchant princes, Khojah Phanoos Khalandar and Agha Catchick Arakiel—he cultivated his merits of a very high order and through undaunted perseverance he rose from a poor boy to the exalted position of a financial king of the Colony, its greatest landowner, one of its most generous benefactors and a leader in its administration. By virtue of his keen foresight and business acumen, he amassed great wealth and became associated with the history of leading commercial concerns, public organisations and institutions in the land of his adoption and thus became known affectionately as “The Grand Old Man of Hongkong”. He was identified with practically every public movement there and was a member of the Executive Council since 1896. In 1897 he became the Chairman of the Queen Victoria Diamond Jubilee Committee. In recognition of his numerous outstanding public services he was awarded the C.M.G. (Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George), and in 1902 he was made a Knight Bachelor.

Sir Catchick Paul Chater passed away in Hongkong on the 27th May 1926 at the age of 80 years and his loss was deeply mourned by all who knew him or who had heard of him.

During his lifetime he was a generous giver and was especially munificent in his gifts to Churches and Temples of Learning. His gifts were bold in character and extent and today constitute strongholds for the maintenance and sustenance of his innumerable beneficiaries. While it is impossible to enlist here even an abbreviation of his extensive charitable donations, it can be recorded that La Martiniere College and the Armenian Church in Calcutta have the good fortune of being foremost among the recipients of his princely benefactions. After providing magnificent bequests for his relations and friends, the residue of his estate was left to the Armenian Church in Calcutta.

In perpetuation of the memory of a true friend and noble benefactor of Armenians in Calcutta, a well-equipped, modern three-storied building, adjoining the Armenian Chapel of St. Gregory in Park Circus, has been constructed, wherein residence, complete with all amenities, is provided for deserving members of the Community.





(The late) Arathoon Gregory Apcar



(The late) ARATHOON GREGORY APCAR

Born in Julfa-Isfahan, Iran, in 1779, Arathoon Apcar came to India at the age of 16 years and entered into service with an Armenian merchant of Bombay, named Alexander. After the death of this merchant, Arathoon carried on the business. He gained considerable commercial experience and decided to transfer his business to Calcutta, where better facilities for trading with the Far Eastern markets existed.

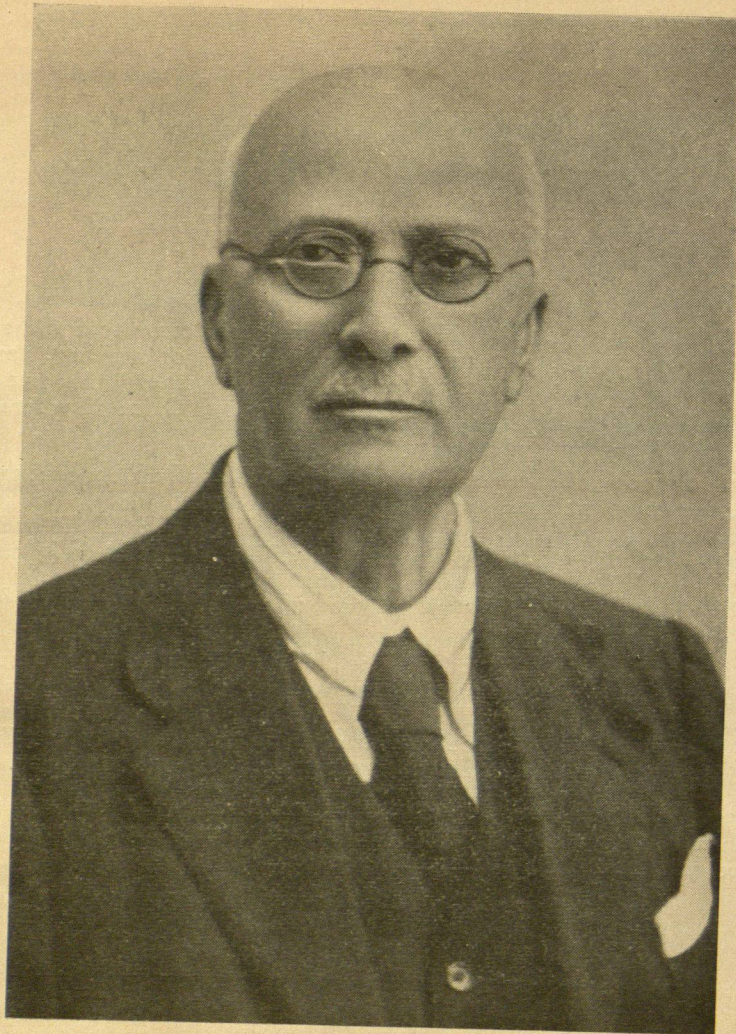
In 1830 he founded the firm of Messrs. Apcar & Co., which concern gradually attained prominence in the commercial life of Calcutta. With increasing profits, Arathoon Apcar extended his business in Jute, Coal, Shipping, etc. and his firm became the owners of collieries and transport steamers, engaged in the Indian trade with the Far East and Japan.

In the pursuit of his business activities he was always mindful of the great need of his nationals in all parts of the world.

Possessing the virtues of a true Christian, he loved his Church and religion. He was charitable and patriotic and a good friend of the needy. During his lifetime he contributed materially to the welfare of his compatriots in India and Iran. He created many trusts for the benefit of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth in Calcutta and other Churches in Julfa, and for the maintenance of the poor and needy members of his Community.

Respected and loved by all during his lifetime, Arathoon Apcar was deeply mourned at his death, which took place in Calcutta in 1863, at the ripe age of 84 years. He was laid to rest in the churchyard of the Holy Church of Nazareth.





(The late) Thaddeus Mesrobe Thaddeus



(The late) THADDEUS MESROBE THADDEUS

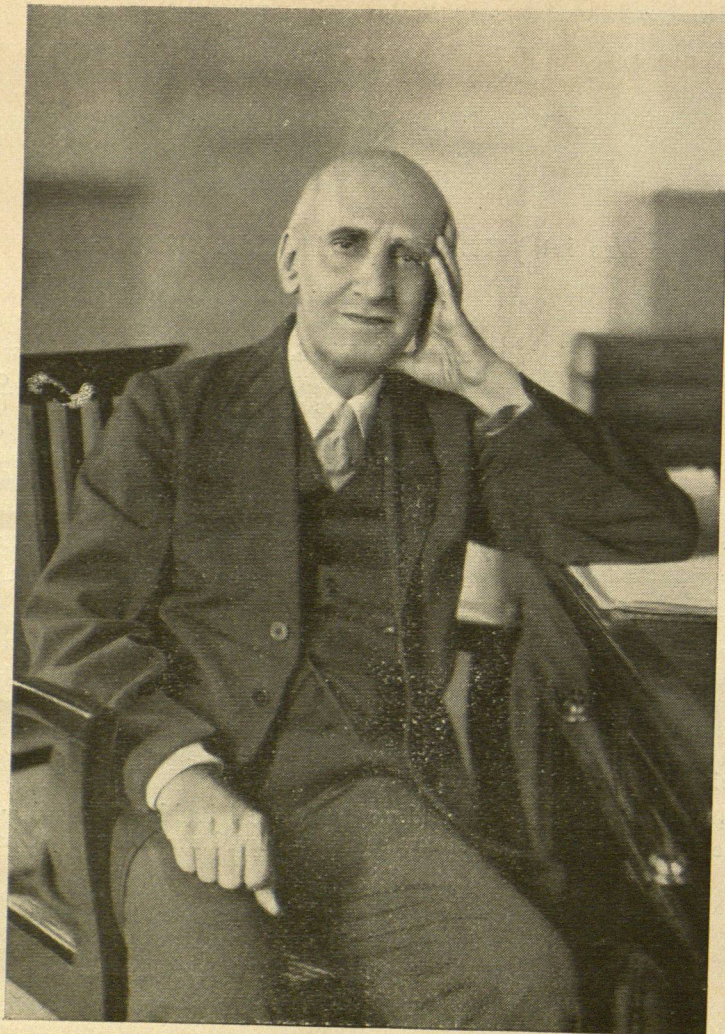
Born in Calcutta on the 7th June 1851, Thaddeus Mesrobe Thaddeus was educated in the Armenian College and in La Martiniere, Calcutta. After his scholastic career, he joined a commercial house and concentrated his interests on the Jute Industry and Trade. When he had acquired a fair knowledge of this commodity for his future career, he decided to work independently and started an establishment of his own, which went under his name. Through undaunted efforts and scrupulous honesty, he succeeded in building up a fine reputation in the Jute trade in Calcutta and became known as one of the best brokers in the line.

Following his inclinations, with shrewd forethought, he invested his earnings in landed properties and in later life became one of the principal landlords of this city, the best among his holdings being the well-known Park Mansion in Park Street.

His genial disposition helped him to make many friends in business and in social circles. His affection for his compatriots, though seldom personally expressed, was always evident. He was associated with the Armenian Church and the Armenian College and served on the Committees of both institutions for many years. He gave full expression to his love for his Church and for educational causes by munificent bequests for the amelioration of his needy compatriots in Calcutta.

At the age of 76 years, Thaddeus Mesrobe Thaddeus passed away peacefully in Calcutta on the 28th October 1927, and was interred in Nazareth's Holy Church.





(The late) David Avietic Davidian



The Founder-Benefactor of Davidian Girls' School, Calcutta

Born in New Julfa on the 17th October 1858, David came to India at the age of 14, in quest of learning. Unfortunately lack of necessary funds prevented him from fulfilling his earnest desire and he had to be satisfied with an elementary education only. After his brief school life, he took up an appointment with the East Indian Railway, but soon left this post and joined the well-known firm of Advertising Agents and Railway Station Bookstall-holders, Messrs. A. H. Wheeler & Co. By sheer hard work, honesty in purpose and thriftiness, he made rapid progress with this firm and eventually attained its Senior Directorship. His earnings were invested in several landed properties in Bombay and in Allahabad, of which latter town he was a resident for many years.

In the early 1910's, after his retirement, he settled in Calcutta, where he purchased a house, No. 19 (now No. 15), Royd Street, which was to serve as a school in later years.

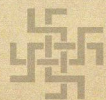
Throughout his long association with these Institutions he strove for the improvement of educational facilities for Armenian boys and girls, in order to enable them to participate fully in the advantages of learning—a privilege he had not enjoyed. Thus he conceived the idea of establishing an educational institution for girls—a counterpart to the Armenian College—which would afford opportunities to future Armenian mothers to learn all subjects, including their mother tongue, and thus to maintain and enhance the status of his compatriots in India.

Davidian Girls' School opened on the 1st March 1922 at Mr. David's residence with two pupils only. But it was not long before the number of students increased considerably and the need for larger accommodation was felt. In 1924 the late Mr. David purchased Nos. 1A and 1B, Ashutosh Mukerjee Road and transferred his school and residence there. He took charge of his own school and was able to appreciate the immense benefits which he was bestowing upon his community, through his laborious efforts. Before the end of the 1920's he had around him many scores of children, participating in the educational amenities provided for them through several qualified teachers.

He completed his magnificent work by creating a trust, whereby almost his entire wealth was devoted to the cause of Davidian Girls' School, and by electing a Board of Management for his school, to be responsible for its continuous functioning after him.

Entirely satisfied with the benevolent achievements of his untiring efforts, David Avietic Davidian passed away peacefully in Calcutta on the 7th February 1936. His remains lie buried in the churchyard of the Armenian Church of St. Nazareth.

A beautiful marble bust now stands in his School hall, erected by his admiring friends to commemorate Mr. Davidian's beneficent deed in founding the Davidian Girls' School.





(The late) J. C. Galstaun, O.B.E.



(The late) J. C. GALSTAUN, O.B.E.

Was born in New Julfa, Isfahan, in 1859, and came to India as a young man. Among the most notable Armenian merchant princes of recent times, Mr. J. C. Galstaun was at one time fabulously wealthy. He was the only individual to be honoured by a private visit from the Prince of Wales, now the Duke of Windsor, when he visited India in 1921. It was at Galstaun Park, his palatial residence in Lower Circular Road, that he received the royal visitor.

This magnificent house Mr. Galstaun furnished with Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture imported from France, and decorated with Sevres and Japanese porcelain, Dresden china, bronzes, oil paintings and other valuable objets d'art.

Mr. Galstaun lost much of his wealth in later years and Galstaun Park, with many of its art treasures, was sold to the Nizam of Hyderabad, who renamed it Sabe Palace. The Palace is still in his possession but all the art treasures came under the auctioneer's hammer two years ago.

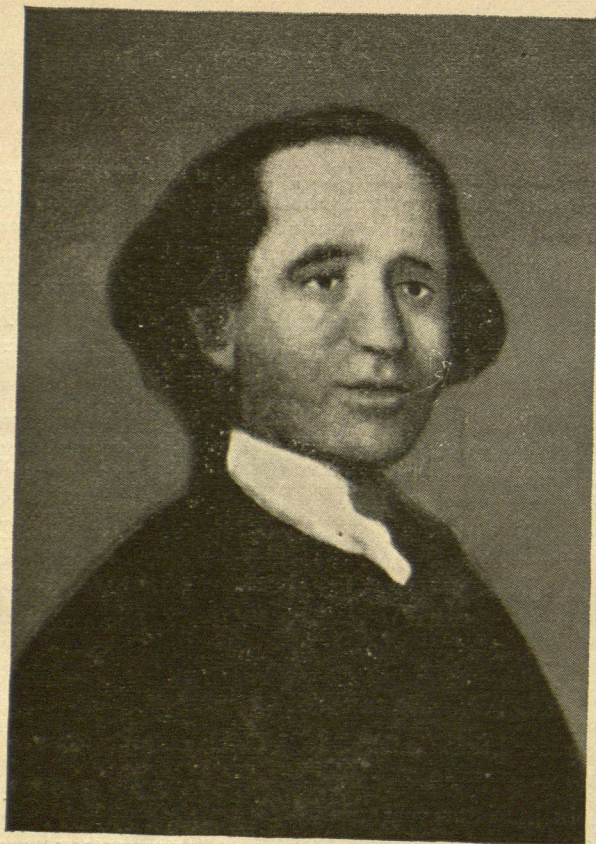
During the Prince of Wales' visit, the young Prince presented a Cup for the Calcutta races, and this much coveted trophy was also won by one of Mr. Galstaun's horses. The stake money, amounting to Rs. 15,000/- was given to the Prince by Mr. Galstaun for charity.

This was not Mr. Galstaun's only act of liberality, for he gave the handsome donation of Rs. 25,000/- towards the cost of the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta. During World War I, he placed Galstaun Park at the disposal of the Army for sick and invalid British soldiers and, in appreciation of this, the O.B.E. was conferred on him by the Government.

We should also record that the late Mr. J. C. Galstaun was a very patriotic Armenian and always a good friend of the needy.

In poor health in his later years, Mr. J. C. Galstaun died in Calcutta at the age of 89 and was buried in the churchyard of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth.





(The late) Joseph Emin



Joseph Emin was born in Hamadan, Iran, in 1726 and came to India for his education.

Being intensely patriotic, he set himself the task of endeavouring to rescue his countrymen from the yoke of non-Christian oppressors. With hardly any resources at his disposal, he went to England for a course of military training, which he succeeded in obtaining through the generosity and help of the English aristocracy, with whom he became acquainted and whose sympathy for the cause of his compatriots he was able to gain.

After succeeding in his objective, he set out for Armenia via Turkey and Georgia, his aim being the organisation of a joint force of Armenians and Georgians for attainment of freedom. Unfortunately he met with very serious opposition everywhere and, after long struggles and extensive travels lasting over two decades, he was compelled to abandon his plan and return to India. He passed away in Calcutta in 1809 and was laid to rest in the churchyard of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth.

While he was not able to render material help to his Community in Calcutta, his zeal, enthusiasm and great patriotism are unforgettable and his undaunted spirit and unceasing efforts, a praiseworthy example for his Nationals.

At the suggestion of his friends, Joseph Emin wrote his Memoirs in English, translations of which, in Armenian, are expected to be published in America shortly. A book entitled "The Life and Adventures of Joseph Emin" containing his memoirs, letters to friends and experiences, was compiled and published by his great-great-granddaughter, the late Miss AMY APCAR.

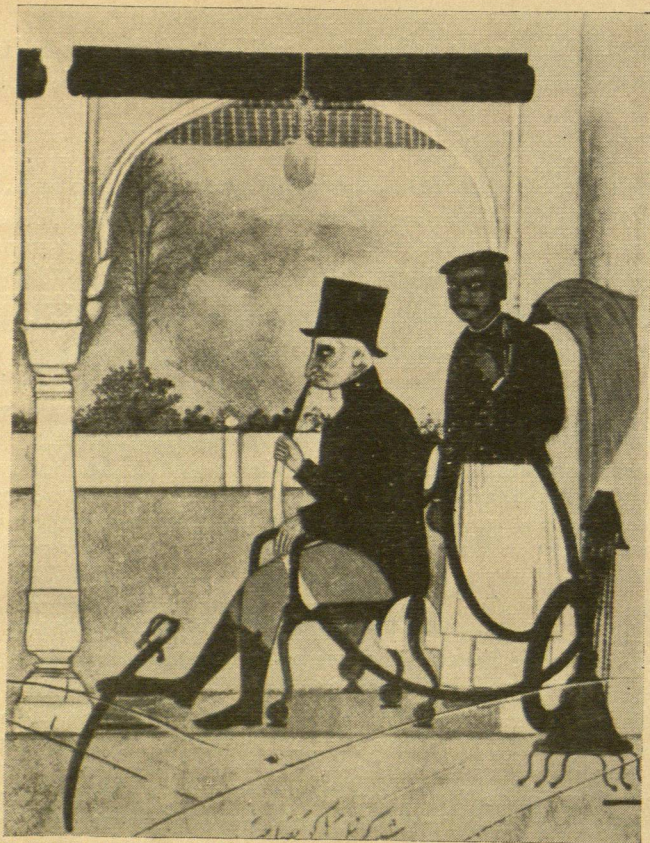
A worthy descendant of this famous family, Miss Amy Apcar was born and educated in Calcutta. She inherited the great patriotism and religious love of her parents and grandparents and devoted her entire life to the cause of her Community.

She was connected with many charitable undertakings for the benefit of Armenians in Calcutta and elsewhere and rendered yeoman service to her Church. Among other publications, she produced "The Liturgy of the Armenian Church", the notations for which she compiled herself. For long years she undertook the training and conducting of the Armenian Church choir, consisting of the Armenian College boys. In addition, she looked after the clothing of the College boys, providing them with new outfits successively.

Apart from her lifelong services to her Community, Miss Amy Apcar created a trust for the benefit of the Armenian Church in Calcutta and for the continued training and maintenance of the Church choir.

At the age of 79 years she passed away in Calcutta, on the 26th August 1942, and was interred in the churchyard of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth.





(The late) Colonel Jacob Petrus of Gwalior



(The late) COLONEL JACOB PETRUS OF GWALIOR

Jacob Petrus was an Armenian born in India, at Delhi, in 1755. He attained great military distinction in the service of Scindiah and amassed a great fortune, enjoying the high esteem of the Maharaja. He came of respectable Armenian parents; his father, Petrus, being a merchant who left his son a heritage of Rs. 5,000/-.

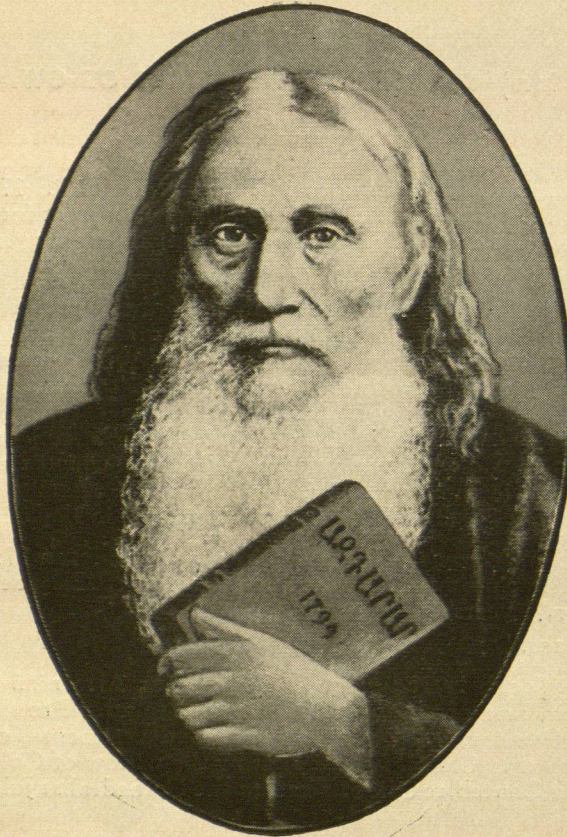
Jacob Petrus, however, did not follow in his father's profession, having no love for either commerce or trade, but turned his attention to military pursuits, formed a military Corps and fought for the different native Chiefs. Finally, he entered the army of Scindiah and, in this service, for conspicuous bravery, organization and leadership, was made a Colonel by Dowlat Rao. For 70 uninterrupted years Jacob Petrus served Scindiah faithfully and loyally: and, when he died on the 24th June 1850, aged 95, full of years and honours, a salute of 95 minute guns was fired from the ramparts of the historic fort at his burial. His grave is in the Armenian Cemetery of Gwalior, and on the beautiful tombstone are three inscriptions in Armenian, English and Persian. The epitaph in English reads as follows:—

“Sacred to the memory of Col. Jacob. Born 24th March 1755, obit 24th June 1850. Aged 95 years and three months. He commanded the first Brigade of Scindiah, whom he faithfully served for 70 years.

“May he rest in peace.”

In his lifetime, Jacob Petrus erected the Gwalior Armenian Church and maintained for many years an Armenian priest at his own expense to attend to the spiritual wants of the Armenian Colony at Gwalior. The sacred vessels and vestments, of great intrinsic value, which had belonged to this Church, were sent by the widow of Colonel Jacob, prior to her death, to the Armenian Church at Calcutta and to the Cathedral at Julfa (Isfahan).





(The late) Revd. Father Arathoon Shumavonian



(The late) REVD. FATHER ARATHOON SHUMAVONIAN

Born in Iran in 1750, Arathoon Shumavonian received his early education mainly from learned clergymen, whose influence helped him to accept holy orders later in life. He served in the Armenian Churches in Iran for a few years and attained considerable success.

While in Shiraz, he was unfortunately plunged into deep sorrow by the loss of his two sons, within one week, which drove him into retirement for several years. During this period he engaged himself in the further study of the Armenian and Persian languages, which he mastered successfully.

Through constant persuasion, his intimate friends and well-wishers succeeded in bringing him back to work in his Church. He came to India in 1784 and served as the spiritual head of Armenians in Madras for forty years.

His great love for literature was always evident. In addition to his official duties in the Church, he devoted long hours to the study and publication of books and papers. In 1789 he started a printing press, where he printed several books in Armenian, his first publication being "The Martyrology of Virgin Mariane". On the 28th October 1794 he published the first ever Armenian journal under the title of "Azdarar" ("Intelligencer"), a monthly magazine containing subjects of social, commercial and literary interest.

His zeal and perseverance helped him to overcome many difficulties. He worked unceasingly for the enlightenment of his compatriots and earned the high esteem of his Nationals, not only in India but in all parts of the world as well. Among his diverse duties he succeeded in manufacturing the paper on which "Azdarar" was printed, in the contemporary primitive method of handmade paper production from cotton-pulp. Unfortunately the life of this journal was of a short duration and ended in February 1796, eighteen months after its start. During his lengthy service in Madras he was gratified to evidence the well-being of his compatriots, many of whom took an active part in the commercial life of that famous city.

The father of Armenian journalism passed away in Madras on the 9th February 1824 at the age of 74 and was laid to rest in the Armenian Churchyard. Befitting tributes were paid to his revered memory during his funeral and again on the 9th February 1924, when the centenary of his death was commemorated in many of the Armenian Churches throughout the world.





A facsimile of the title page of the journal “Azgaser Araratian”

(The above is reproduced in the absence of a photograph of Mesrobe David Thaghadian)



(The late) MESROBE DAVID THAGHIADIAN

Born in 1803, he was a native of Erivan in Armenia, and died at Shiraz in Persia on the 10th June 1858. A marble mural tablet, erected in the Armenian Church of that city by his devoted friend, the late Thaddeus Catchick Avetoom of Calcutta, bears an inscription in Armenian metrical verse, of which the following is a translation :—

“Here in this dark tomb rests MESROBE DAVID THAGHIADIAN, an erudite professor, a profound scholar, an eminent poet and an author of great merit. The entire society of Armenian literati shall always honour thee with enthusiasm, and neither New Julfa nor Calcutta will ever forget thee. Died 10th June 1858.”

From his youth upwards Thaghiadian had an ardent desire for knowledge and early distinguished himself as an Armenian scholar. He left his native country and came to India via Persia in 1823. Arriving at Calcutta he was soon admitted into Bishop's College as a foundationer by Bishop Heber, whose memory he revered throughout his life.

In 1845, through the strenuous exertions and with the hearty co-operation of the late Manook Zorab, Thaddeus Catchick Avetoom, and a few other Armenian gentlemen of Calcutta, the Araratian Society was formed for publishing books, etc., in the Armenian language. The Society had for its organ “Azgaser Araratian” (the “Patriot of Ararat”), an Armenian literary journal, ably edited and conducted by Mesrobe David Thaghiadian. During the short space of two years (1845-1847), besides editing the journal and superintending the Press and the Seminary of St. Sanduct, this highly-gifted scholar published about ten original works, justly held in high repute, in the classical language of Armenia.

A born idealist, Thaghiadian was, all the days of his stormy life, a confirmed nationalist, a patriotic writer and the zealous standard bearer and indefatigable champion of the glorious culture and the nonpareil literature of ancient Armenia. From his forceful and facile pen, honey and venom flowed alike. Fools were his theme and satire his song.

This year marks the centenary of the death of Mesrobe David Thaghiadian. We earnestly hope that Armenians the world over will fittingly celebrate the occasion and honour this famous Armenian, who was not only a great poet but also a great national worker.





(The late) Mesrobe Jacob Seth, M.R.A.S., F.R.H.S.



(The late) MESROBE JACOB SETH, M.R.A.S., F.R.H.S.

Born in New Julfa on 15th March 1871, young Mesrobe came to India for studies and was educated in the Armenian College, Calcutta. He attained brilliant success as a scholar, especially of Classical Armenian, his favourite subject, of which he was an ardent lover and a noted exponent.

Although engaged in business, he considered this occupation to be a means of livelihood, and devoted almost his entire attention to his literary activities. He displayed extraordinary aptitude for and interest in historical and antiquarian research and for many decades engaged himself energetically in the study of old manuscripts, letters, epitaphs and memorial tablets in Churches and cemeteries throughout India and in presenting these collectively and intelligently to his compatriots and to those interested in these studies.

The late Mr. Mesrobe J. Seth's endowments, to his Community in Calcutta particularly and in India generally, are his various publications, foremost among which "Armenians in India" is the result of lifelong historical research and untiring laborious endeavours. The late Mr. Seth—a scholar and a champion of Classical Armenian—spared himself no trouble or inconvenience to unearth interesting historical data of the activities of Armenians in India for over two-and-a-half centuries and has thus gained the true gratitude of Armenians in all parts of the world.

Mr. Seth, who was always proud to be known as Mesrobe J. Sethians of New Julfa, passed away peacefully in Calcutta on the 31st October 1939.





Mr. Zebedia John Hananian



Mr. ZEBEDIA JOHN HANANIAN

Born on the 14th March 1901 in Julfa-Isfahan, Iran, young Zebedia was educated in the twin National Institutions of his birthplace.

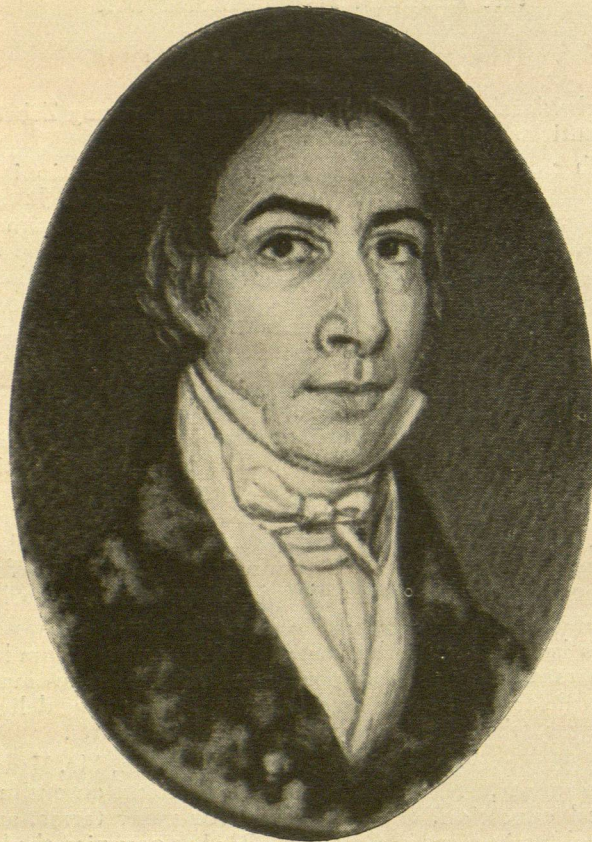
A younger brother of the highly-respected and noted educationist and clergyman, the late Revd. Garegin Johannes, and a nephew of the well-known Julfa historian, the late Thathevos Haruthian, the author of "History of New Julfa" (in 2 volumes), Zebedia showed literary inclinations from his very early days. Outside his classroom, he was keenly interested in lectures, debates and theatricals. He took full advantage of the Raffi and School Libraries in New Julfa and greatly benefited by a close perusal of contemporary national papers and journals. His keenness for journalism soon became evident to his teachers, who appointed him, at the age of 15, on the editorial staff of the School's monthly publication "Jankhier".

His zeal for Armenian journalism grew with the years and resulted in his many contributions to national publications in different parts of the world. But his thirst was not satisfied until his undertaking of the beautiful presentation of his Calcutta publication "Nor Azdarar" monthly. For over six years Mr. Hananian spared no effort, time or money on the exhaustive task he had set himself and succeeded in presenting to his compatriots in India and elsewhere a publication, which greatly enhanced the proud prestige of his nationals in India. Unfortunately, through unforeseen circumstances and financial reasons, his efforts were brought to a standstill recently, but he continues to cherish the fond hope that, in the near future, it will be possible for his compatriots in this part of the world to revive and carry on the good work he started and carried on at great sacrifice.

Mr. Hananian's keen love for the stage is well-known. From his schooldays he has played active and important roles in school productions as well as in amateur and professional presentations. A versatile actor of no mean calibre, he has for long delighted and amused his many and varied audiences, who have keenly appreciated his efforts.

Of a retiring nature and possessing a quiet disposition, Mr. Hananian has applied his endeavours behind the scenes. As an ardent nationalist and an enthusiastic encourager of his young compatriots' education, he has served for many terms, and still does, on the Committees of National Institutions in Calcutta. He has occupied the honoured position of an examiner of the Calcutta University for Armenian subjects for quite a few years now.





(The late) Arathoon Kaloos

(The late) ARATHOON KALOOS

Born in Tokat in Anatolia in the year 1777, this patriotic son of Armenia came to India towards the end of the eighteenth century and founded the first Armenian School in Calcutta in 1798.

For nearly a quarter of a century he conducted this School, training and educating many pupils, among whom was Johannes Avdall, who left a mark on the Educational life of Armenians in Calcutta.

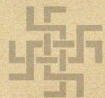
After the foundation of the Armenian College & Philanthropic Academy in 1821, his many influential friends persuaded Kaloos to amalgamate the two schools and, in 1825, this merger was completed and the teaching scope of the College extended.

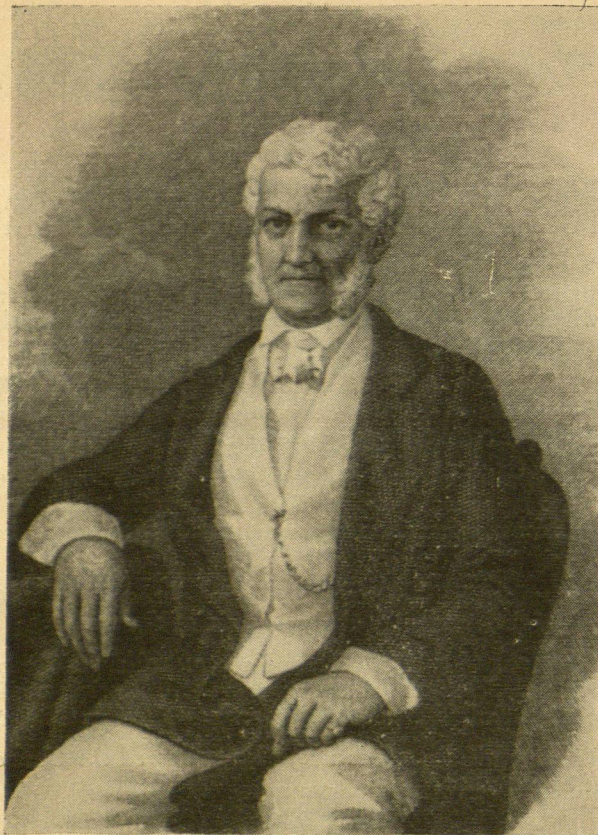
Being a zealous educationist and a devotee to the advancement of his compatriots, throughout his career as a teacher Kaloos applied his energies to the instruction and training of the young generation and thus earned for himself the respect and love of his pupils and of his Community.

On the 10th November 1833, Arathoon Kaloos passed away in Calcutta and was laid to rest in the churchyard of the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth.

He left an endowment to this Church and a bequeathal for the benefit of poor Armenians in Baghdad, Shiraz and Calcutta. A memorial tablet, bearing the following inscription, was erected in the Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth by the Church Committee :

“In memoriam of Arathoon Kaloos, Esquire, who endowed the Church with ten thousand rupees for the relief of the poor.”





(The late) Johannes Avdall



(The late) JOHANNES AVDALL

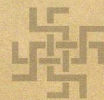
Johannes Avdall was born in Shiraz, Iran, in 1803. He came to India at an early age and was educated in Calcutta. A young man of quiet disposition but possessing an insatiable thirst for knowledge, he devoted long hours of his days to the study of the English and Armenian languages and succeeded in distinguishing himself as a scholar of these. He was fortunate in being instructed by the eminent educationist Arratoon Kaloos, whom he always held in high esteem and affection.

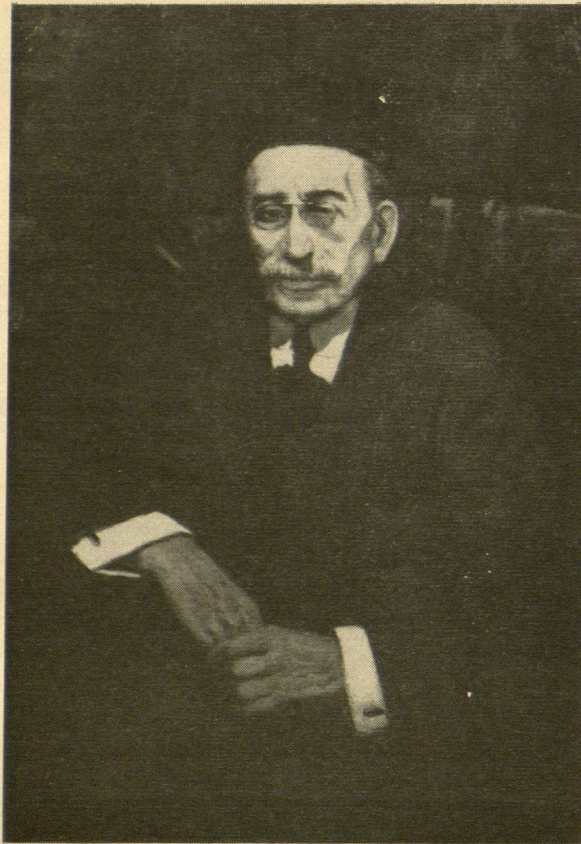
On completion of his studies and particularly after attaining a high standard in Armenian—Classical and Modern—he joined the staff of the Armenian College & Philanthropic Academy in Calcutta and became the Armenian Headmaster and later the Rector of this Institution. For forty-five long years he rendered meritorious service to the College, which owes him a great debt for his administrative and educational efficiency.

Johannes Avdall was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for nearly half-a-century and made worthy contributions to the contemporary cultural life of Calcutta. Noteworthy among his literary achievements are his translations of

- a) Samuel Johnson's "Rasselas", from English into Classical Armenian;
and
- b) Father Michael Chamchian's "History of Armenia" (known as "Khrakhchan"), from Armenian into English.

At the age of 67 years, this distinguished Armenian teacher, educationist and classical scholar, died in Calcutta on the 11th July 1870, and was buried in the Armenian Churchyard at 2, Armenian Street.





(The late) Thaddeus Stephen



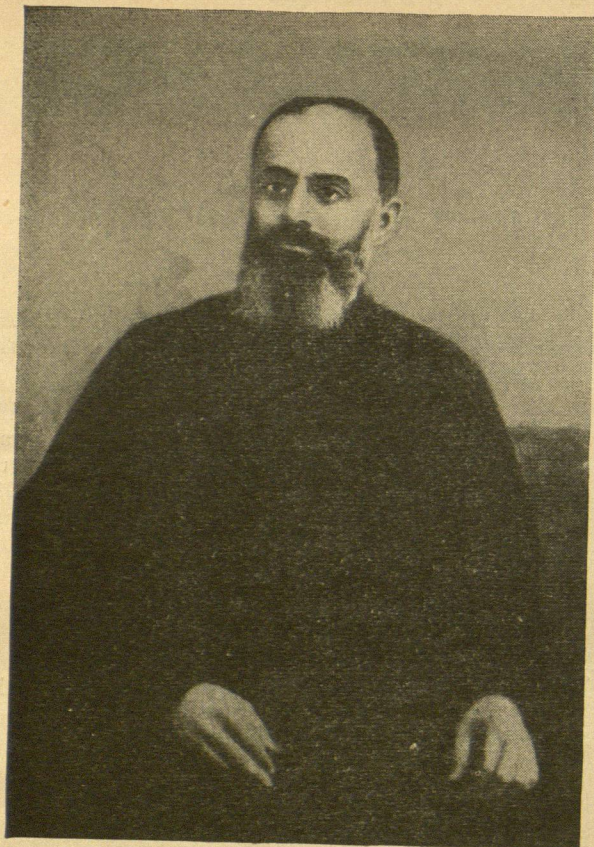
(The late) THADDEUS STEPHEN

After the death of Johannes Avdall, Mr. Thaddeus Stephen, an Armenian scholar and a specialist in Classical Armenian, was entrusted with the rectorship of the Armenian College & Philanthropic Academy in Calcutta.

Although pre-eminently a scholar and teacher of Classical Armenian, Mr. Stephen was an educationist and an administrator of high standard and was able to apply these qualifications advantageously for the benefit of the students he dearly loved. During the many years of his stewardship, the College made satisfactory progress in all its activities and gained noteworthy successes. The outstanding achievements of his numerous pupils in their careers proved that the education and training they had received at the hands of their great teacher was ably and correctly administered.

Despite an interruption of nearly 12 years, between 1883 and 1895, Mr. Stephen served the College conscientiously for many years and his pupils, including those who had passed out of the College, were very sorry when advancing years and failing health compelled him to relinquish his position in 1904. Shortly thereafter he went to his nephew in Canada, where he passed away, at a ripe age, in the early 1920's.





**(The late) Right Revd. K. G. Tourian,
M.A., D.D.**



(The late) RIGHT REVD. K. G. TOURIAN, M.A., D.D.

Mr. Kevork Tourian was appointed the Principal of Armenian College & Philanthropic Academy in Calcutta in 1908.

He was a highly qualified educationist, a keen sportsman and a zealous worker. In a comparatively short space of time he introduced manifold improvements in the various spheres of the College activities and gained most favourable comments by the Inspector of European Schools in Bengal and others.

He introduced the Cambridge Examinations in the College and within a year successfully presented students for these. He visited Cambridge and personally persuaded the University authorities to include Armenian Language—Classical and Modern—in their curriculum.

In the field of sport he was a source of great encouragement to his boys, who achieved noteworthy successes in competitive athletics and in team competitions.

As a strict disciplinarian he appreciated the value of military training for boys. He encouraged the College cadets to greater achievements and was gratified to have them classified as the leading company of Student Volunteers in Calcutta. In fact the Armenian College Company was known as one of the smartest of the Second Calcutta Volunteer Rifles.

Unfortunately his term of office was of a comparatively short duration and concluded in the year 1912, but he was able to fulfil his cherished desire to serve his Church as a dignitary. He was ordained a Bishop just before the first World War and accepted duties in Trabizond in Turkey. But cruel fate awaited him in that country. He was murdered by military guards in Erzeroom in 1915.





(The late) Simon Mihigian



(The late) SIMON MIHIGIAN

One of five children of a respectable family, Simon was born in Van, where he received his education. During the first World War his family suffered the fate of many others, lost their entire possessions, became refugees, and some of its members even lost their lives. Quite unexpectedly, and by mere chance, Mr. Mihigian reached India in 1915.

Soon after arrival in Calcutta, he joined the staff of the Armenian College, where he rendered conscientious and faithful service for many years, rising to the post of headmaster, which he held for a decade.

Possessing an amiable nature and quiet disposition, he could exercise all the virtues of a teacher on his pupils without recourse to corporal punishment. He was gentle and kind and ever-watchful of his boys' errors, which he corrected in his unique, quiet and effective way. His affection for his pupils kept him busy within the precincts of the College premises, which he seldom left.

An ardent nationalist, a true lover of everything Armenian—good and clean—he considered it his duty to inculcate patriotism and healthy habits in every boy, paying particular attention to individual needs. Although his duties were confined to the teaching of Armenian subjects, he was not satisfied with classroom work only. During spare hours, voluntarily, he delivered lectures on contemporary events, hygiene, social and moral manners and habits, and thus helped his pupils to attain high standards of morality, patriotism and discipline. For him an effective additional method of teaching his beloved language was to hold debating classes among his pupils, who found these interesting and instructive.

In his spare moments he indulged in Armenian literature and was able to find time to write a book entitled "Ariuni Dzor" ("The Valley of Blood"). Unfortunately he was never in a financial position to have this work published.

After a short illness, Mr. Simon Mihigian passed away in Calcutta on the 2nd June 1939, at the comparatively young age of 57 years. He was held in very high esteem and sincere affection by all his boys—old and new. As a mark of respect to his revered memory a tombstone, with appropriate inscription, was erected on his grave by his grateful pupils.





(The late) Mrs. Sandookht Johannes

(The late) Mrs. SANDOOKHT JOHANNES

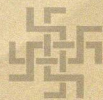
Born in Julfa-Isfahan, Iran, on the 10th December 1892, the late Mrs. Johannes was educated in the National schools of her birthplace.

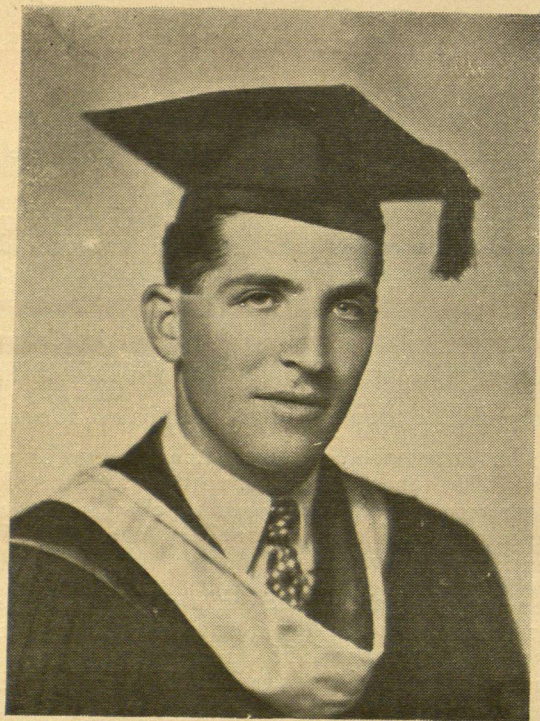
After the First World War, she came to India with her family and, being keenly interested in the training and education of her young compatriots, succeeded in persuading the late Mr. David Avietic Davidian to start a primary school at his residence for the instruction of young Armenian girls.

Thus the foundation of Davidian Girls' School in Calcutta was laid and work commenced in 1919. Through Mrs. Johannes's efforts and persuasion, the munificent national benefactor finally created his well-known trust, whereby the entire wealth of the magnanimous founder became the property of the Institution, for the benefit of his Nationals.

Ever since those early days, the late Mrs. Johannes devoted unceasing care and attention, combined with motherly tender affection, to the students of Davidian Girls' School. The destinies of this Institution and the welfare of her charges received her constant attention and the successful advancement of this educational haven, as also of its pupils, is due, in no small measure, to her untiring endeavours.

After thirty-five years of uninterrupted devoted service to the School she cared for so much, and to her young compatriots she loved so dearly, Mrs. Sandookht Johannes passed away in London on the 4th December 1956, as a result of an eye operation. Her family members, numerous pupils and many friends in India have greatly felt the void created by her untimely and unexpected demise.





Mr. Vahan Poladian, M.A.



Mr. VAHAN POLADIAN, M.A.

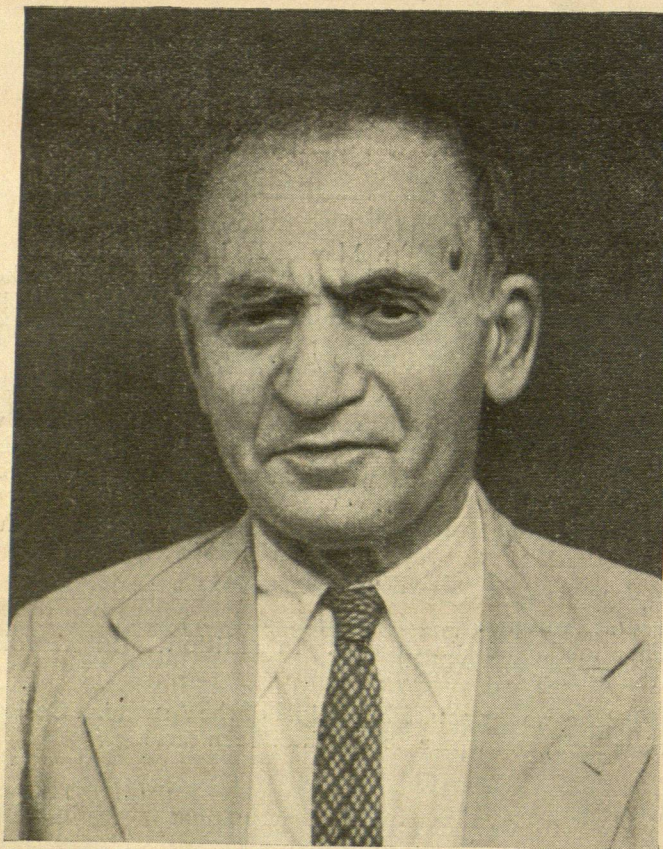
Mr. V. Poladian was born on 20th May 1927 in Kessab, Syria. He received his primary education in the National United School of Kessab. Then he studied in the Ousoumnassiratz Secondary School of Kessab for two years. When this institution was closed down, due to the annexation of the Sanjak with Turkey, he became a student of the Gulbenkian Technical School at Aleppo for one year.

Unable to continue his studies due to financial difficulties, he taught for one year in the Armenian School of Douzaghaj village near Kessab. Two years later, with the kind help of his brother, Bishop T. Poladian, he resumed his studies at the High School Section of the American University of Beirut, which he finished after three years, in 1946. He received his Intermediate of Arts diploma in 1948, having passed in the first division. Two years later, in 1950, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree with distinction. He concluded his studies in 1952, when he obtained the Master of Arts degree in Philosophy.

During the academic year 1949-1950 he was a part-time teacher in the Armenian Theological Seminary at Antelias. During the academic years 1950-1951 and 1951-1952 he was a full-time teacher in the same institution. In addition to his teaching duties he acted also as assistant to the Prefect of Discipline.

In August 1952 he was appointed Principal of the Armenian College, Calcutta, which he joined in November 1952, and where he has since been serving.





(The late) Caribjan Cachatoorian



(The late) CARIBJAN CACHATOORIAN

Born in Seghert, Armenia, in 1882, Caribjan Cachatoorian, as a young man, fled from his homeland at the time of the Turkish massacres of 1899 and came to India, by way of the Middle East, in 1901.

Although being then almost 20 years of age, nevertheless, because he knew it was necessary for him to learn English if he was to earn a livelihood in India, he took admission into St. Joseph's School, Calcutta, for the purpose of studying the language. Here he proved an apt pupil. Indeed, in a short space of time he so mastered the language, that in later years, he not only wrote several articles in English, but also a history and guide-book of the city of his adoption—Calcutta, a volume that is today a recognised work on the subject and which has won the admiration and praise of, not only the citizen of Calcutta, but of the foreigner as well.

After leaving school, Caribjan Cachatoorian joined the East Indian Railway, where he served conscientiously and diligently for many years. On his retirement from this service, being interested in the subject of printing, he bought a printing press—the first Armenian-owned press in Calcutta—which he managed with such skill and industry that he soon turned it into a profitable business. It was in this Press that the Armenian journal "Nor Azdarar" was printed throughout its short but brilliant life. In this Press, too, has been printed, for the past several years now, the calendar of the Armenian Church of Calcutta, which has been praised and admired by Armenians all over the world. It is from this Press, also, that the present volume emanates, and the publishers of this book would like to acknowledge here their deep thanks and appreciation of the services and help rendered by the Press in the production of this work. The Press is now being capably managed by Mr. Cachatoorian's two sons, to whom we wish all success in the future.

A staunch and patriotic Armenian, a devoted scholar and master of the Armenian language and of Armenian history, Caribjan Cachatoorian was also a pious and zealous Christian, always ready, and indeed eager, to help the poor and needy. His gifts to the Church include an exquisite and costly complete Vestment, presented to His Holiness the late George VI, Catholicos of all Armenians, in the year 1948: the loudspeaker in the Armenian Church in Calcutta was also installed through his generosity.

In poor health in later years, Caribjan Cachatoorian died in Calcutta in 1956. He lies buried in the Armenian cemetery in Park Circus.



**Register of Names of Officiating Priests of the
Armenian Holy Church of Nazareth, Calcutta, recorded in
chronological order, since 1793**

Date	Name	Date	Name
1793-1797	Rev. Hacob Ter-Petrosian	1826-1827	Rev. Catchatour Harouthiunian
1793-1802	„ Galstaun Martyrosian	1827-1828	„ Hovannes Mackertchian
1794-1795	„ Gevork Babanian	1830-1834	„ Harouthiun Eghiaian
1795-1813	„ Hovsep Stephannosian	1831-1836	„ Lazar Gregorian
1798-1802	„ Martyrose Davidian	1831-1837	„ Hovannes Ter-Avietian
1803-1807	„ Lucas Ter-Gevorgian	1836-1840	„ Anton Avagian
1803-1804	„ Gabriel Ter-Stephannosian	1837-1842	„ David Mackertchian
1805-1808	„ Aviet Ter-Minasian	1838-1841	„ Eliazar Andreasian
1808-1813	„ Harouthiun Ter-Minasian	1841-1845	„ Carapiet Ter-Abrahamian
1808-1813	„ Marcar Ter-Carapietian	1842-1843	„ Abraham Ter-Carapietian
1812-1814	„ Zakaria Ter-Petrosian	1842-1844	„ Harouthiun Ter-Eliazarian
1814-1821	„ Aviet Ter-Minasian	1843-1846	„ Petrose Antonian
1814-1822	„ Lucas Ter-Gevorgian	1844-1847	„ Carapiet Gregorian
1821-182	„ Hovsep Stephannosian	1844-1847	„ Marcar Andreasian
1821-1826	„ Galoost Harouthiunian	1844-1872	„ Hovannes Khachikian
1822-1826	„ Hovsep Ter-Mackertchian		(Vicar)
1825-1829	„ Abraham Ter-Karapietian	1845-1846	„ Mathevos Gregore Karibian
1826-1827	„ Harouthiun Ayvazian	1846-1849	„ Barsiegh Galstanian
1826-1831	„ Anton Avagian		(Archpriest)
1826-1830	„ Hovannes Galstanian	1846-1849	„ Martyrose Ter-Hovakiemian



